DISCOURSES

Upon several

Practical Subjects.

By the late Reverend
WILLIAM PAYNE, D. D.

WITH A

PREFACE

Giving some Account of his

Life, Writings, and Death.

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THE PREFACE.

THE *Limits of a Preface will not allow the writing the Life of the Author of the following Diſcourſes, neither have I materials by me for ſuch a work. My firſt acquaintance with him was ſometime after his ſettlement in* London. *I was the more inclined to a Correſpondence with him, becauſe he had his Education in* Cambridge, *under, and was much eſteemed by Dr.* H. P. *a perſon never to be nam'd by me, without paying a very particular honour and reſpect to his memory.*

Antoninus *begins his admirable Inſtructions of life, with an account of his ſeveral Benefactors, from whom he had learnt this and that piece of uſefull and practical knowledge: inſtead of many, I am obliged to inſtance in this excellent Man alone, to whom I am more indebted, than to all the Teachers I ever had; and I take this opportunity to give publick Thanks to God for the happy opportunities I enjoy'd of his wiſe In-*

ſtructions and Counſels; from him I learnt rightly to underſtand Religion, the Idea's of which had been ſo confounded by falſe Teachings, and the notion of it ſet forth in ſo frightfull a manner, that there is reaſon to conclude, that it was the ſuperſtition of the former, which has laid the Foundation of the too viſible Scepticiſm and Infidelity of the preſent Age. From him I learnt that the Laws of Religion were intrinſically good, and infinitely for the benefit and advantage of reaſonable Creatures, which is the only true notion of it, which can ſecure the Faith, and keep up the practice of it among Men, who muſt and ever will be ſway'd by what they are once thoroughly perſwaded is their chief Intereſt and higheſt Benefit. He was a Man of clear thoughts which he always freely communicated, and of ſo univerſal a Benevolence, and took ſuch delight in doing good, that he obtain'd the name of Pamphilus *among his Friends. My acquaintance was never large, and I have ſtaid a little of the longeſt in the World, to outlive moſt of thoſe few Friends I once had; but ſo far as my ſmall experience has reacht, I cannot but ſay, I never knew a better Man, a wiſer Chriſtian, or a truer Friend. The Reader, if he be good natur'd, will pardon me for ſtepping a little out of my way, to pay a debt of Gratitude. To return to our Author, of whom I have undertaken to give ſome account, from the time of my firſt acquaintance*

quaintance with him. He had not been long in Town, before he was taken notice of by ſome of the beſt Judges of Learning, who ſoon diſcerned his Abilities, and how fit he was for thoſe undertakings, in which the Service of the Church afterwards required him to engage; I mean in thoſe perillous times, when both our Religion and our Civil Rights were ſo viſibly endanger'd, that many deſpair'd and gave them up for loſt. The Members of the Church of England *ſtood in this breach, which they maintain'd with that Courage, that the Enemy gave back, and a ſpace was gain'd for our deliverance: The behaviour of the Divines of this Church, will be remember'd by Poſterity, and a Collection of their writings at a time when others were ſo ſilent and complying, will remain a ſtanding Armory againſt Popery, whenever it ſhall renew its attempts upon us. Then it was that he ſhow'd both his Courage and his Skill in defending our eſtabliſhed Religion. The former in contemning thoſe numerous threatning Letters, ſome ſent him by the Penny-Poſt, and others thrown over his Garden-Wall; and one night a Divine, of about his bulk, and a Friend of his, coming late thorough* Harrow-Alley *into* Goodman's-fields, *which was his uſual walk home, two Men with drawn Swords came up to him, and ſtaring him in the face, ſaid the one to the other,* 'tis not he, *and ſo went off; which had no other effect upon him, but to give him a cau-*

tion not to ſtay out in the Evenings. His abilities I need not ſay any thing of, they are ſufficiently ſeen in thoſe Learned Treatiſes publiſhed by him, on this occaſion, The Adoration of the Hoſt, the Sacrifice of the Maſs, and that extraordinary diſcourſe in anſwer to the Biſhop of Meaux's *Book of Communion in one kind; not to mention his leſſer pieces of the ſixth Note of the Church, and his Examination of the Texts of Scripture produced by the Papiſts for the Celibacy of Prieſts: whoever carefully reads over thoſe Treatiſes will find the ſubject exhauſted, and that he needs not to ſearch any further into thoſe Arguments; and by thoſe conceſſions, ſo Ingeniouſly made to his Adverſaries, which ſhow'd that he ſought Truth only, and not Victory, the poſſibility of a reply ſeems to me to be prevented; and the Learned* French *Prelate, who has ſhow'd himſelf to have dexterity enough for moſt undertakings, would yet I believe be loth to be put upon the uneaſie task of defending his Book againſt that anſwer to it. When the fear of Popery was over, it was the general expectation that our little diſputes and controverſies would be thrown up, and to prevent any future danger, we ſhould be at perfect Peace and Union among our ſelves. The behaviour of the Clergy in circumſtances when they expected nothing but ruin to themſelves and their Families, it was hop'd had removed all the Jealouſies of our Diſſenting Brethren, and diſpoſed*

poſed them to ſuch a temper, that there ſeemed nothing wanting to gain the wiſeſt and beſt part of them to our Communion, but to let them be aſſured, that we would receive them kindly; nothing could ſo effectually ſecure us from the like dangers from Popery for the future, nor keep up the practice of Religion and good Morals, as putting a final end to the Schiſm, and uniting us in one Communion. Some were of Opinion, that this was not poſſible to be done, but by a Comprehenſion; they ſaid that an opportunity for this had been ſlipt within their memories, and that now they had another very fair one, which it would be unpardonable to let paſs: beſides, they ſaw that without it, a general Toleration would paſs in Parliament, the ill conſequences of which were eaſily foreſeen. Others apprehended, that no Condeſcention would unite us, that our Diſſenting Brethren would not be ſatisfyed unleſs they could carry all before them, and that were they taken into our Communion, they would make no other uſe of the Privilege than to over-turn our Conſtitution as ſoon as they had an opportunity for it; and therefore they thought it was better we ſhould continue as we were, till we could have aſſurance that we ſhould not be ridiculed for making alterations unrequeſted, and without any likelihood of anſwering the end thereby propos'd. This was wholly a matter of Prudence, and who was in the right could not preſently be deter-

nined, and therefore 'tis not to be wonder'd at that there ſhould be different ſentiments about the means in thoſe who all joyned in the ſame end. Our Friend, with whom I have often canvaſſed the Queſtion, was in his judgment, which he ſincerely followed in all things, for a Comprehenſion, and tho' he had a juſt ſenſe of the ſin of Schiſm, and look'd upon that among us as utterly unjuſtifiable, and that nothing of any moment could be urg'd in defence of it; yet his Opinion was, that this was the only Method, which the preſent follies and miſtakes of Men would admit of, to eſtabliſh the honour and intereſt of the Church, and to recover expiring Piety, Charity, and other Chriſtian Virtues, which by our diviſions had received a wound not to be cured, without the uſe of this balm. Upon theſe conſiderations, he was prevail'd with ſo far to concern himſelf on this occaſion, as to reply to a little piece, entituled Vox Cleri, *publiſhed by a Learned and Eminent Divine, as in the name of the Clergy; which Circumſtance, with the ſtile of the anſwer being a little too facetious, for ſo aged a Divine as his Adverſary, raiſed him ſome Enemies: but had he lived never ſo long, I believe he would hardly have concern'd himſelf any further in propoſing expedients of Peace, the very mentioning of which, as his experience taught him, made Men ready to Battle. The deſign of the Comprehenſion being laid aſide, the Toleration bill paſs'd into*

into a Law, with prudent Limitations for regiſtring the places of Aſſembling, the names of Preachers, and for ſecuring the Fidelity both of them, and their people (who were to be known to what Congregation they belonged) to the Government; but as it has been managed and uſed, without regard to the directions of the Statutes, 'tis a ſanctuary for ſuch as are, as well Enemies to the Government, as to Religion; 'tis an aſſumed liberty to avoid all civil Tyes, and to be of any Religion, or none, to worſhip God in their own way, or not to worſhip him at all; 'tis a refuge for Atheiſm, Irreligion and Prophaneneſs, and has produced ſuch a neglect of publick worſhip and corruption of Morals, as are very ſcandalous in a Chriſtian Kingdom. Some little Writers about this time expounded this Law to diſcharge all perſons from all obligation to Church-Communion in point of Conſcience; but this tittle tattle was nothing to what has ſince follow'd, every one taking the liberty according to the Model of Spinoſa's *happy Commonwealth, to Speak and Write as he liſts.*

It was a little ſurprize to us, ſo ſoon almoſt as our Controverſies with the Papiſts, and our fears from that party were over, to be encountred with a ſet of Men, who, with unuſual confidence profeſs an enmity to all Religion, and bid defiance to the common faith of mankind; who talk wildly of a Religion,

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very improperly called ſo, which has no dependance upon Times, Places, or Perſons, to Miniſter in holy things; a Religion without worſhip or any publick Offices, whereby it is profeſs'd, a thing never heard of before in the World. No man ought tamely to bear an attempt to ſet aſide that publick Honour that is done to the Sovereign Lord of Heaven and Earth; and no Chriſtian can be ſilent when the Lord that bought them, is openly deni'd and his Miſſion ridiculed. Whither are we going, when Pamphlets are to be ſeen on every Stall, wrote directly againſt Chriſtianity *? when under the pretence of advancing Reaſon, Revelation is thrown up, and at beſt is allow'd to be no more than a means of Information, but no neceſſitating motive of aſſent? Are theſe men of* Cardan *the* Aſtrologer's *mind, that the Law of Chriſt ſhall be chang'd? and ſhall it give way to that ſect, which all the other Philoſophers expos'd, and* Epicurus *be ſet up as a Maſter and Teacher, inſtead of our Bleſſed Saviour? Do they think to be too hard for God? Are they ſtronger than he? It has been obſerved, that whoever breaks violently in upon the Laws of his Country, tho' he may for a time brave it, and preſume himſelf beyond controul, in the end the Laws are always too hard for him, and cruſh him to nothing: and ſhall men hope to be ſafe, who ſpit in the face of Heaven, and trample all the Laws of God under their feet?* Lucretius

tius *was as great a Bravo, and no way inferiour to any modern writer, in the* Atheiſtical *way either in Wit or Argument; and yet Religion has kept its ground and will do ſo, whatever vain imaginations ſome few fools may entertain of gaining a victory over it; however there are thoſe who are reſolved not to give over their attempts, and ſeem to be combin'd in a cloſe Confederacy, and with united ſtrength to try what they can do. The Age every one ſees, is extremely addicted to lightneſs and vanity, and to turn every thing that is grave and ſerious into ridicule; to make the beſt advantage of this prevailing humour, they have a ſort of Retainers to Atheiſm, who are as great Enemies to Reaſon as to Religion, and have neither enquir'd into what Religion has to ſay for it ſelf, or the objections againſt it; their work is to break a Prophane Jeſt or two upon it, and if they can but ſet down theſe in writing, they grow into a great Opinion of their Parts, and take it for an affront for any Man to ſpeak a wiſe word in their Company. Others, for each ſeems to have his part aſſigned him according to his Genius, pretend to be men of deep thoughts, and to have ſearcht into all the ſecret Arts of* Prieſt-craft, *and to have examined the juggle of Myſteries to the bottom; and withal, to have a great Charity for the long miſguided World, oppreſt under the Tyranny and ſlaviſh fear of Religion; and yet in all this*

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their design seems to be meerly to banter mankind. The Author of Christianity not Mysterious, *has wrote a labour'd Book to amuse the world, and prove nothing; he acknowledges there are Mysteries without number, and yet will allow nothing to be call'd so: he will not suffer Mysteries in Revelation, where reason can know nothing beyond what is reveal'd, to be argued from Mysteries in nature, where reason is a proper Judge; whereas one would think that if in things knowable by reason, we find difficulties we cannot solve, it should seem less strange when we meet with as great in matters of Revelation, which we can know nothing of, further than they are reveal'd. He will not have a thing said to be above reason, because it cannot be imagined or conceived; and yet makes above reason to signifie something unconceivable or unimaginable, and to be the same with Mystery. He asserts that there is nothing in Religion, that is above reason, and yet confesses that there are things in it, of which we have not an Adæquate and Compleat Idea, which is, what is meant by being above reason: And because we need not understand what we cannot discover by our natural faculties, or infinite goodness has not been pleas'd to reveal to us; proposes it, as a Compendious method to all usefull knowledge, not to trouble our selves or others, with what God has reveal'd, because we do not understand all that belongs to its nature or man-*

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ner of exiſtence : and yet after all this conceſſion of the imperfection of our knowledge, and that there are ſome things we cannot comprehend, affirms that God and Eternity, are no Myſteries, for want of an Adæquate and compleat Idea of them ; and that Infinity and Eternity are as little Myſterious, as that two and three make five : theſe are certainly at preſent great difficulties, but he has promiſ'd to ſolve them all, only he refers this to a ſecond Book ; but he is ſo cautious as not to limit himſelf to any time for the publiſhing it, that depending upon health and leiſure, which he very wiſely ſays, are things in no Mans power to command at his pleaſure ; and yet are much more ſo, than what he has ſo very vainly made a ſhew of undertaking. The Socinians *may take it ill to be ranked with thoſe who ſpeak and write againſt Religion, but 'tis too apparent that they joyn with them in their attempts upon revealed Religion, and with them carry thoſe on with ſuch Arguments, as will at laſt bear very hard upon Natural, which is not wholly without its Myſteries ; and God himſelf, the belief of whoſe exiſtence is the foundation of all Religion, is as incomprehenſible as any the objects of the Chriſtian Faith. Theſe men were once ſtrenuous aſſerters of the Authority of the Scriptures, but being preſs'd hard with the unreaſonableneſs of that Principle, not to believe any thing tho' confeſt to be plainly and expreſſy revealed,*

ed, unleſs they ſaw how the thing could be; they have bethought themſelves rather to leſſen the Authority of thoſe Books than to inſiſt longer on ſuch a ſenſe of 'em, as no other Man, and 'tis hard to think they themſelves, can judge to be their meaning.

Is that great principle of the Reformation, That the Scriptures are the ſole rule of Faith, come to this? They deſerve to be ſent to the Iſland of Anticyra, *if they have any thoughts of utterly running down revealed Religion; but they may prepare the way for that Church, which by ſo many Arts and Stratagems has attempted to overthrow the Reformation; and 'tis an exceſs of Charity, not to believe that ſome of 'em are employed to that purpoſe, and deſignedly write to ſerve that cauſe.* Socinus *himſelf did vigorouſly maintain the worſhip of Chriſt; how agreeably with his principles may be ſeen in his diſpute with* F. D. *but his Followers have given it up, and take it ill that any ſhould charge them with honouring the Son, as they honour the Father; will any man deny this to be a proper ſeaſon to* contend earneſtly for the Faith once deliver'd? *and can a Chriſtian not call to mind, on this occaſion, thoſe words of our Bleſſed Saviour,* whoſoever ſhall confeſs me before men, him will I confeſs before my Father, which is in Heaven? *Theſe conſiderations awakened the zeal of this excellent Man I am ſpeaking of, to*

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ſtand betwixt the living and the dead, and to try to ſtop the plague that was begun; to this purpoſe he firſt drew up a diſcourſe of Myſteries in Religion, which, not publiſhing at that time, he afterwards contracted into two of thoſe diſcourſes that were in the Preſs at his death. After this, he applyed himſelf to examine the Socinian *Controverſie, as it relates to the Doctrines of the ever Bleſſed and Adorable Trinity, about which, he ſpent much time, and many thoughts; he was fully perſwaded that herein lay Chriſtianity, as diſtinct from natural Religion, and that upon the* Socinian *principles, it was impoſſible to clear the Scriptures from being purpoſely wrote to lead mankind into the groſſeſt Errors and plain Idolatry: and that take Chriſtianity at the beſt it could amount to no more than an Inſtitution of Morals, that Myſterious Method of the Redemption of mankind by the Incarnation, Obedience and Paſſion of the Son of God, and all the hopes of ſinners from a Covenant of Grace, being hereby entirely given up. Theſe thoughts were enough to ſtartle any one, who had a concern for the honour, or being of Chriſtianity. He firſt ſet himſelf carefully to examine the Sacred Records, which ſpeak ſo plainly of the Son and the Holy Ghoſt, as diſtinct Perſons from the Father; and ſo expreſly aſſert their Divinity, that it was juſt matter of wonder to him, how this could be overlook'd or miſtaken: we are indeed amu-*

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fed with Eaſtern phraſes and proper Idi-oms of ſpeech, long ago out of uſe, which, if underſtood, we are told, would make that ſence eaſie to us, which ſome are pleas'd to put upon the Sacred Oracles: but if the memory of theſe be perfectly loſt, how comes it to be known that there were ever any ſuch in uſe? and yet, unleſs they know what they were, how can they pronounce them ſerviceable to their cauſe? but if any remain, why are they not produc'd or ſome other Book inſtanc'd in, wherein any foot-ſteps of 'em remain? The notion which the ancient Jews *had of the* Meſſias, *is, That he was God who ſhould become incarnate. Of this there are ſufficient intimations in the Prophets, and it was the received ſence of the ancient* Jewiſh *Church; the Conception of him as a meer Man, was an error which ſprung from that groſs expectation they had of him, as a Prince and a mighty Conqueror, who ſhould advance the* Jewiſh *Nation above all the Kingdoms of the Earth. And this ancient notion of the* Meſſias *is doubtleſs a better rule to follow, in interpreting what is ſaid of him in the writings of the new Teſtament, than to confound theſe by putting a ſence upon them, contrary to what the words import, and referring us to phraſes, that no body knows any thing of, to make it out. But whatever thoſe Eaſtern Idioms of ſpeech were, the Primitive Church could not be ignorant of them, and their Faith and Worſhip muſt be allow'd to be a full evidence of*

of the ſenſe in which they underſtood theſe Sacred Writings; 'tis *true, there were ſome whoſe Memory can be no credit to any Party, who in the very age of the Apoſtles, impugned our Saviour's Divinity: but againſt theſe,* St. John *wrote his Goſpel, beginning it with as full and expreſs aſſertions of our Saviour's Divinity, as can be imagined; and in his Epiſtles he calls theſe Hereticks the Anti-Chriſt that were already come. Afterwards aroſe* Praxeas, Noetus, *and after both, about the middle of the third age,* Sabellius; *theſe preſt with the Authority of Scripture, which ſo expreſly declares the Son and the Holy Ghoſt to be God, aſſerted only one Perſon* trinominem, *which was owning a Trinity only of names: againſt theſe the Church declared the Chriſtian Faith as it was written and as it had received and kept it, that the Father is not the Son, nor the Son the Father, nor the Holy Ghoſt Father, or Son; the Father* alius à filio, *the Son* alius à Patre, *the Holy Ghoſt* alius a Patre & Filio, *each to be conſider'd under his proper Character, and in himſelf as a diſtinct Perſon, tho' all three united in one indiviſible nature. In the ſame age we meet with* Paul *of* Samoſata, *advanced by* Zenobia *to the Chair of* Antioch, *he is properly ſtyl'd the Father of our modern* Socinians, *for he aſſerted that Chriſt was a meer Man, and had no exiſtence before his Conception in the Womb of the Holy Virgin,*

and was the Author of that foolish contradictory Notion of a Deus factus, *and the* Socinians *have only reviv'd his Heresie, which was condemned in the Council of* Antioch, *and in a second himself depos'd. In the beginning of the next age,* Arrius *a Presbyter of the Church of* Alexandria, *sets up to be Patron of a new Heresie, differing both from* Sabellius *and* Paulus, *but agreeing with them in opposing the Divinity of our Blessed Lord; he maintain'd another Essence of the Son and denied his Coeternity and Equality with the Father; and many falling in with him, the whole cause was publickly heard, the controverted Texts of Scripture, and the constant Tradition of the Church about the sence of them carefully examin'd, and the Worship of the whole Christian Church appeal'd to, and by these was the Christian Faith explain'd and asserted. The fourth age being the time fix'd on, and the Eastern Church, the Stage on which these things were done; our Author, who had a mind to look thorough this Controversie, set upon examining the Records and Writings of that time, that are extant, particularly he carefully perused the Confessions and Decrees of the great Councils of* Nice, *and the first of* Constantinople, *wherein were no new Articles of Faith fram'd, but the old ones declared and explain'd, which the Church has both Authority and Obligation to do, as the rise and growth of Heresies make this ne-*

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ceſſary; and the works of thoſe two great Men, St. Athanaſius *and* St. Baſil, *and he found full ſatisfaction, and met with a Compleat recompenſe, for all the pains his ſearch had coſt him. Being to Preach in his courſe at* Weſtminſter *on* Trinity Sunday, *he pitch'd upon thoſe words of the Apoſtle,* 1. Cor. 8. 5. but to us there is but one God, *as the Theme of his diſcourſe; this he did not only with reſpect to the day, which was ſufficient to juſtifie him in undertaking ſuch an Argument, in ſo Learned an Auditory; but with regard to the boldneſs of our* Socinian *Adverſaries, who have been very free in charging the Doctrine of the Trinity with Abſurdities, Contradictions, and Impoſſibilities. What he propos'd was to defend our Common Faith of the Divine Trinity and Unity, which is the peculiar Scheme and Conſtitution, and Character of Chriſtianity; and to reſolve that obvious difficulty of believing thoſe Divine Perſons of Father, Son, and Holy Ghoſt, to be each of them God, which is the Chriſtian Faith, and yet to maintain with the Apoſtle that to us Chriſtians* there is but one God. *It ſo fell out that ſome paſſages, or rather words, (as is very common in the tranſient hearing a diſcourſe) were not rightly apprehended, which had like to have been the occaſion of a diſpute betwixt him and ſome of his Brethren, very eminent for their Learning, and of known zeal for the Common Faith. This*

occasion'd his Letter in defence of his Sermons, to the Right Reverend Bishop of R. who, as he was by his place a proper Judge to be appeal'd to; is upon all other accounts so qualified, that no Man who knows him, would refuse his Umpirage in any thing, wherein Learning and Judgment joyn'd with Integrity and Candor, are required: but it went not so far, for he was soon better understood, and both sides satisfi'd. 'Tis not necessary for me to say, why that discourse has not been yet published; the reason is not that any thing new is advanced in it, or what is not exactly agreeable with the Notion, Language and Terms of the Church, in constant use at the time when this Question was discuss'd: some of the Authorities produced by him, the World has already judg'd of; I say some, for he has collected a great many more to the same purpose, but he thought these sufficient. The last Winter of his life he spent in reviewing his thoughts on this Argument, and examining them with all possible strictness, by the Scriptures and the Church Records; and it was great satisfaction to him that he had clear'd his own thoughts about this Adorable Mystery, and found nothing to lie uneasie to them, in believing with the whole Christian Church upon the Authority of Revelation, that there is but one Essence, which we call God, and yet that in the Godhead, there are three Persons of the same Essence and Power

Power and Coeternal; taking the name Perſon in the ſence of the Church, not for a meer different mode or manner of ſubſiſting, or in a metaphorical ſence, but for what properly ſubſiſts: and he hop'd he had done ſomething for the clearing other Mens thoughts; however, the honour of our Saviour and of the Chriſtian Faith and Religion, were the things he had in his Eye, and were ſincerely intended by him, in all that he had either Preach'd or Wrote on that ſubject.

The World ſeems at preſent to ſtand very much in need of ſuch Men, who want neither Learning nor Courage to ſtop the inſults of the Enemies, not to this or that particular Church, but to Chriſtianity it ſelf; and tho' God whoſe counſels are unſearchable takes away ſome at a time when they were likely to have been moſt uſefull, yet he will always leave a ſufficient number thus qualified to defend his own cauſe. I dare not now undertake to give a full and juſt Character of our Author, I will venture to ſay ſomething, but what, I am ready to own, falls ſhort of him; he was a Man of great natural endowments, and what is more to his commendation, of indefatigable induſtry; he never left a ſubject till he had ſearch'd it to the bottom, and perfectly cleared his own thoughts about it: In his younger years he was much taken with Experimental Philoſophy, having from his firſt enquiry into Books and Things, always ſet the

higheſt value upon that knowledge he thought moſt uſefull, and by a Collection of obſervations left under his hand, it appears that he had ſpent ſome time and pains that way. In the year 1681. Novem. 23. *I find him admitted* Fellow of the Royal Society ; *but upon his ſettling in* London, *he laid aſide thoſe ſtudies and wholly apply'd himſelf to that, which was his proper Profeſſion: his chief aim being now to do the utmoſt good he could among thoſe over whom he had a paſtoral care, in that renowned City. The effects of his Labours remain to my own knowledge, among ſome of his Pariſhioners, who have own'd to me the great benefit they have receiv'd by his conſtant Preaching, both in helping them rightly to underſtand and engaging them in a ſerious practice of Religion, and by his Writings they are more generally known. The viſiting a whole Pariſh from Houſe to Houſe, I cannot ſay to be a neceſſary part of the Paſtoral care, I rather lay it in faithfully and conſtantly diſcharging the publick Offices. It would be a ſad thing to be accountable for the neglect of what in great Pariſhes is confeſs'd to be impracticable ; this therefore can only be an occaſional duty, in which, a Miniſter muſt be left to his own prudence, who is beſt able to judge what good is likely to be done in this way, and when. I have heard our Friend ſay more than once, that if he could ſee the neceſſity of it, or thoſe wonderfull ends*

it

it would ſerve, he would throw up all his own concerns, and apply himſelf wholly to it: however, he ſupply'd the want of that, in the beſt manner he could, and by ways he thought much more uſefull to ſuch as were diſpos'd to mind the concerns of their Souls. For the uſe of his Pariſhioners he firſt compos'd, and afterwards by Printing it, offer'd to their cloſer conſideration his admirable Practical Diſcourſe of Repentance, *wherein he has rectify'd many miſtakes and looſe notions about this Doctrine; ſuch as have had a very fatal influence upon the lives of many, who all the while looked upon themſelves in a ſafe ſtate: they are chiefly owing, as I apprehend, to their not diſtinguiſhing betwixt baptiſmal Repentance, and the Repentance for willful ſins, many and long continued in, after Men have covenanted with God for a conſtant courſe of obedience. Two days before he died, he thank'd God that he had lived to publiſh that Diſcourſe*; Not, *ſaid he,* That it is Wrote with that care and exactneſs it might have been, for it was compos'd in parts, and at ſeveral diſtant times; but I think it may be ſerviceable, which is the only end I propoſed in it, to teach the right knowledge and practice of that duty. *I am ſenſible that ſome have taken exceptions at what he affirmed of the invalidity of a Death-bed Repentance, but 'tis no more than is ſaid by many others, and as far as I ſee, muſt be own'd by all, who*

throughly examine that ſubject. The Queſtion is not what God may do, or ſometimes does, by an extraordinary act of Grace, but what he has covenanted for, or what are the plain and indiſpenſible conditions of Salvation required by the Goſpel. A Malefactor, upon whom the Law has pronounc'd death, may be pardoned by ſpecial favour; and if a ſinner, who never repents till he comes to die, be ſav'd, this is ſhowing him more mercy, than is covenanted for in the Goſpel-Law of Life: and in what inſtances God will abate of thoſe Terms, no Man can tell, and 'tis the higheſt folly and madneſs to truſt to it, without a particular Revelation. That God will make allowance for Mens Circumſtances in this World, and judge their ſeveral caſes with the greateſt equity, and proportion their rewards and puniſhments accordingly, come within the Terms of covenanted Grace and Mercy; but the Queſtion is whether a Miniſter of the Goſpel, who viſits an habitually wicked Man, in his laſt ſickneſs, can aſſure him, he ſhall be ſaved on ſuch a Repentance; if it comes up to the Terms of the Goſpel, he may give him this aſſurance; and then this Doctrine may be Preach'd, yea, and ought to be for all the Goſpel-conditions of life, and Salvation are to be publiſhed to all. Such Preaching would be very comfortable to thoſe who would be glad to ſave their Souls, and yet are very loth to fore-

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go their ſins; and are not like to be perſwaded to this, as long as they have any hopes of ſecuring them by repenting when they come to die; Theſe ſeem to be very plain conſequences of allowing the ſufficiency of a death-bed Repentance, by the terms of the Goſpel. For his Pariſhioners, he likewiſe drew up a Manual of Devotion, to be uſed daily in their families, and put a great number of them into the hands of the Collecter of his Tythes to be diſtributed among them: he apprehended the decay of Piety and coruption of manners to be in great meaſure owing to the neglect of family Religion, which be therefore took the opportunity after this to recommend in a Sermon preach'd before the Lord Mayor, and Court of Aldermen, whoſe example was like to give the beſt Encouragement to it: which they ſo well approv'd of as to deſire him to publiſh it. His thoughts were that the true cauſe of the general neglect of Family Devotion, is the wrong notion Men have entertained of Forms of Prayer, which is a thing ſo paſt all diſpute, that it muſt lie upon the Conſciences of thoſe who have denied 'em, if, now that the effects of that error are found ſo evidently ruinous to Piety and good Morals, they do not in ſome publick way retract it, and adviſe to the uſe of Forms, without which the uſe of conſtant Family Prayer can never be retriev'd. He was ſo intent upon doing good among his people, that he was often propoſing to himſelf and asking his Friends

to

to think of ſomething wherein he might be moſt uſefull to them; he endeavour'd to free the minds of other Men, as he has done his own from falſe and looſe principles in Religion, the effects of which will in a ſhort time appear in the Life and Practice. His Religion did not lie in ſhows and meer forms of Godlineſs, which we need not an Apoſtles Teſtimony to aſſure us, may be ſeparated from the power of it; I take him to have been in that ſtate deſcribed by St. John *when he ſays,* he that is born of God doth not commit ſin, for his ſeed remaineth in him, and he cannot ſin becauſe he is born of God; *He would not, I dare ſay, for all the World have committed a known, willfull, and deliberate ſin, and I am ſure would have been horribly afraid of himſelf if he had fallen into one ſuch ſin. I could here give in evidence for what I ſay, if it were neceſſary, a ſignal inſtance of a vigorous ſence of Religion, and a reſolved and confirm'd vertue, ſuch an one as is not very common. I herein ſay no more of him, than what in Juſtice is due, and what by long experience and many proofs I know to be true of him; he did not indeed diſcover thoſe ſigns of Grace, which ſome Men expect to find in the face; he had not that affected gravity and down-look and dull humour, which a Phariſee would perhaps have ſought for, as a viſible mark of it; He was always cheerfull and gay himſelf, and would ſuffer none to*

be

be otherwiſe, where-ever he came: This, I confeſs, if any thing was an exceſs in him, becauſe it muſt be own'd, that he would be ſometimes merry at other Mens coſt, who could not bear up againſt the ſharpneſs of his wit, which I therefore place among his imperfections. But though he gave way poſſibly too much to that facetiouſneſs and pleaſant air of Converſation, which was very natural to him, and as he thought in mixt Company moſt agreeable; yet in a cloſer Converſation, or when at any time the Argument requir'd it, he knew how to be ſerious; and was pleas'd when any ſubject was ſtarted that required grave talk and ſtrict reaſoning: beſides, he oft took the opportunity of conveying right notions of things and reproving ſome Vices in a jocular way, when he knew not how to do this in any other way; this deſign he often had of doing good, and found it ſucceſsfull where it was leaſt perceived. His Character as a Friend concerns only particular Perſons, who have drawn it at large on their own minds; it ſignifies not much to ſay any of this to others, but if any be curious to know it, I refer them to Plutarch's rules to diſtinguiſh a Flatterer from a Friend. His Friendſhip being grounded upon principles of vertue, his paſſion for his Friend was not Counterfeit, nor his Converſation with him forc'd, but natural and eaſie and all of a piece; he always uſed freedom and would neither fall in with, nor decline taking notice of what he thought

thought was amiss in his Friend: he was ready to assist him to the uttermost of his power and would embark with him in whatever was fair and honest, and nothing else; and would always defend him in his absence.

I have now brought him to the last Stage of his life, and you are to see him die. Now is the truest Judgment to be made of the Wisdom and Steadiness of a Man's principles, and the sincerity and regularity of his actions. Now all meer forms of Godliness are discovered, and the Masks of Hypocrisie fall off, and 'tis no longer a time to dissemble with God or Man; I am very well aware that some very pious Persons, who have no reason for it are under great fears at the approach of death; Natural temper or an habitual melancholy heightned by the present indisposition of body, with a small tincture of superstition, which is incident to very sincere Persons, may cause their hearts to misgive them; and put them into frights they know not why, and when there is no ground for them: on the other side, some Enthusiasts there are who have no manner of claim to happiness by the terms of the Gospel, but have the highest reason to be afraid of that Just Judgment that shall render to every Man according to his works; who yet meet death in a sort of Triumph and Extasie, and talk in the wildest manner of the certainty of their Salvation: this is the effect of the vilest of all principles; for such are those

those which cancell the obligations of the Gospel, and supersede the necessity of a holy life to salvation.

But whatever wrong Judgment Men make of themselves, God will Judge righteous Judgment; and neither the causeless fears of good Men, not the vain presumptions of bad Men, shall have any influence on their future state. So soon as the vital union betwixt Soul and Body is dissolv'd, the one shall find themselves safe, notwithstanding their fears; and the other miserably disappointed under all their bold and groundless confidence: But generally speaking to depart not in Raptures, but in Peace, to die with an undisturb'd yet thoughtfull mind; with a sense of our own unworthiness, and yet, with a full trust in God's promises, ('till the bodily distemper rises so high as to take away the free use of our faculties; after which, all that any Man says or does stands for nothing) I take to be the present and natural reward of a vertuous Life. He who has liv'd constantly under a vigorous sense of God and of another World, who has often had his thoughts in that invisible state, and in all his Actions has manifested his firm belief of, and earnest desire to reach the happiness propos'd; should, one would think, not find it any great difficulty to leave this World to enter upon one far better. Under this happy and most desirable composure of mind was this admirable Man, and sincere

Christian

Christian at the approach of Death, which he had seen advancing towards him for some time, and sensibly felt it drawing nearer him by degrees. The 7th. of February 1696 *was the last time of his appearing in the Pulpit; he then found himself very ill, and that the Sentence of Death was upon him: for that reason he chose to venture abroad to take his final leave of his people in the solemnest manner, and to close up his Ministery by Administring to them and partaking with them of the Blessed Sacrament of our Saviour's Body and Blood; which he ever look'd upon as design'd to be a part of publick Christian worship, and in the first Ages not administred to dying Persons on their sick beds, unless they were in a state of Penance, and were hereby to be restored to the Peace and Communion of the Church. The notion of a* Viatieum *he look'd upon as brought in with Superstition, and that it tended to uphold it; upon which principle, many who neglect this duty a'l their life long, are very earnest for it at their deaths, upon the like reason that the* Clinici *deferr'd the other Sacrament till the last hour. His Discourse was upon these words,* Luke 12. 40. Be ye therefore ready, for the Son of Man cometh at an hour when ye think not. *He designed this as his own Funeral Sermon, as he told the Reverend Mr.* M. *the worthy Lecturer of that Parish, as he came out of the Church,*

and

and his good Friend Mr. S. with whom he din'd that day. He was ſo far ſpent in preaching that he was forc'd to deſire his aſſiſtſtance to conſecrate the Elements, and only gave the Cup himſelf. On the 17th. I providentially came to him, and had the happineſs to attend him to his laſt moments. He had been that day riding abroad to try if he could find any relief from the air, and coming home, ſoon after I was got to his Lodgings, which were then at Iſlington, *his firſt Salutation was after this manner.* My Friend, I have been in expectation of ſeeing thee theſe two days, and glad I am that thou art now come, for 'tis to ſee me die, and aſſiſt me in dying, which is a very kind and friendly Office. *Great part of that day we were ſhut up together, and he entertain'd me with ſuch admirable Diſcourſes, on the moſt important Subjects, and talk'd ſo clearly and with ſo lively a ſenſe of them, that I forgot I was converſing with a dying Friend, and thought it one of the pleaſanteſt days of my whole Life. He began with a Diſcourſe of the empty projects and deſigns of this Life, and the intolerable folly of being entirely taken up with the Pleaſures and Enjoyments, with the cares and thoughts, and buſineſs of this World, when we are every day liable to enter upon a new and unſeen ſtate, which above all things it con-*

concerns us to take care about, and wisely to provide for. This Life is a continu'd round and circle of bodily Actions and Business, but in death these cease, and have an end; that let's down the Curtain, and the Drama of Life is over, and whatever parts we Acted on this Stage, we lay them all aside; and what we enjoy'd in this Body and this World, is to be no more, and as if it had never been, and we only had dream'd of it for a while. He taketh away their breath, they die and turn again to their dust, That, *said he,* is my present Case, *and in that very day all their Thoughts perish,* i. e. *all their apprehensions of Worldly Happiness and Enjoyments with all their mighty projects and designs they had here: how reasonable then is it for us frequently to meditate upon dying, and how properly was it plac'd of old among the first rules and principles of Wisdom. And upon my saying to him, that as he seemed to be got almost to the end of the race of Life, his Friends were running hard after him, and would in a short space overtake him; he replied,* True, but prithee remember that I have got the start of thee. *Here he took occasion to discourse of the Christian Revelation, which has discovered the most amazing, but the most important and momentous Truths for Man to know: 'Tis this, said he, that gives me the greatest ease and satisfaction in my present Circumstances*

cumſtances, and fills my mind with the moſt ſerene hopes, when I can find pleaſure in nothing elſe; and without it all my thoughts, when I ſtretch them as far as ever they will go, are either dark or troubleſome. That God ſhould ſend his only begotten Son into the World in our likeneſs to redeem and ſave Mankind, that he ſhould propoſe by him the advancing us, who are very inconſiderable, yea, ſinfull Creatures to ſuch a height of Glory, as to be equal to Angels, to ſee God as he is, and to have eternally communicated to us of his own Excellencies and Perfections, cannot but affect every one who believes and exerciſes his thoughts about theſe matters, with Wonder and Admiration, with all poſſible Love and Gratitude, and a moſt ſollicitous ſtudy, and endeavour to obey God univerſally, in hopes of that eternal Life, which God, who cannot lie, *as the Apoſtle ſpeaks, has* promiſed. *He added, That the deſign of Chriſtianity and the Terms of Life therein propos'd, did appear to him ſo very plain, that it was juſt matter of amazement, how any Men who had look'd into thoſe records and conſider'd their own nature, and had any notion of the happineſs of reaſonable Creatures, could miſs of underſtanding them aright. The* Antinomian *Scheme he look'd upon as directly* Antichriſtian, *and the very worſt that the moſt malicious Enemies of the Chriſtian name could poſſibly have invented; and he gave me a very*

ſad inſtance of a Perſon who liv'd many years in the habit of a very groſs ſin, and yet had a quiet Conſcience, and thought himſelf very ſafe upon thoſe principles, 'till being ſtartled by a publick Diſcourſe of his, God made him an Inſtrument of ſetting the poor Man right in his Notions, and engaging him to reform his Life; for which his new Convert was very thankfull, and aſſur'd him, That he would not for all the World have liv'd ſo long in the habit of that ſin, if he had believed, as he thoroughly did now, that it would have hazarded his Salvation. Here he took occaſion to ſay that he was much confirm'd in his notion of the nullity of a Death-bed Repentance, by conſidering his preſent Circumſtances. What could I do, *ſaid he*, Were I now to begin to Repent of a long Wicked life? I profeſs, I could not have the leaſt hopes of my Salvation; but, bleſſed be God, this is not my own Caſe, I am ſenſible of a vaſt number of Weakneſſes and Imperfections; but they are ſuch, as I am well aſſur'd, the Covenant of Grace will make an allowance for: I can ſay I have been Sincere in the main deſigns of my Life; and, I thank God, I make no queſtion of being happy, when I can once get looſe from this Priſon of an Earthly infirm body, and ſhall be ſet above thoſe Imperfections, which cannot be wholly remedied in this ſtate, and

and to be freed from which is the reward of the next. *He gave me his thoughts at large, about the Doctrine of the ever bleſsed Trinity, which are not needfull to be here ſet down, eſpecially ſince I have already taken ſome notice of that Matter. All that I ſhall add, is, That he never intended any Controverſie with thoſe who believed this Doctrine; his buſineſs was to defend it againſt thoſe who oppoſed it, and he was fully ſatisfied, that what he had Preach'd and Wrote on this ſubject, was agreeable to the Scriptures, and the ſenſe of the Church; and he was fully confirmed in his Thoughts, by the judgment of the moſt Learned and unexceptionable Divines of our Church. The Right Reverend Biſhop* Pearſon *explains the Divine Unity as he has done, and aſſerts the neceſſity of it, for avoiding that old and ſo often urg'd objection Tritheiſm:* It is moſt neceſſary, *ſays he,* To aſſert that there is but one Perſon, who is from none; for if there were more than one, which were from none, it could not be deny'd but that there were more Gods than one: This Origination of the Divine Paternity hath anciently been look'd upon, as the aſſertion of the Unity, and therefore, the Son and the Holy Ghoſt are but one God with the Father, becauſe both from the Father, who is one, and ſo the Union of them.

He perfectly concurred with this excellent Person, who, without any question, is allow'd to speak the sense of the Catholick Church; and with the Fathers of the Nicene *Council, as their sense is exprest in their Creed, which is a part of our Liturgy. He believed the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, were one God, and yet three real distinct Persons, as evidently distinguish'd in their Persons, as united in their Nature: The Father is not the Son, nor the Holy Ghost; the Son is not the Father, nor the Holy Ghost; the Holy Ghost is neither the Father nor the Son: the true and living God can be but one, the Father is originally the one God; the Son is the same God, but not originally of himself, but has his Divine Essence by Communication from the Father; the Holy Spirit is the same God, not originally subsisting of himself, but having the same Divine Nature and Essence, common both to the Father and the Son, communicated by them both to him; So that Father, Son, and Holy Ghost are one God. The Father originally that one Essence of infinite Wisdom, Power, and Majesty: The one Person originally of himself, subsisting in that infinite Being; The Son is God of God, by being of the Father; the Holy Ghost is God of God, by being of the Father, and the Son, as receiving that Infinite and Eternal Essence from them both: this is the explication of that adorable*

adorable Myſtery, as 'tis deliver'd by that excellent Prelate forementioned, in his Authentick Book upon the Apoſtles Creed. By this time his ſpirits and his breath fail'd him, and he could proceed no further; and now having entertain'd me as long as he could, he gave me to underſtand, That I muſt not expect much more from him, about one thing or other; but that he would look to be entertain'd by me, the little time I ſhould have him with me: And immediately calling the Family to Prayers; ſo ſoon as they were ended, he went to Bed, and was willing I ſhould leave him for that night. In the morning, which was Thurſday, *he deſir'd me to accompany him in his Chariot, to* London *to conſult Dr.* M——, *not that he expected any relief from his preſcriptions, for he concluded himſelf too far gone to be recovered, but becauſe he thought it not fit to omit any thing that could be done, for the ſake of his Family chiefly, whoſe intereſt it was that he ſhould have liv'd a little longer with them. I returned with him to his Lodgings, but he found himſelf ſo far ſpent, that he haſtned to Bed, and deſired me to come up to his Chamber, and in the Church form to commend his Soul to God. Not being willing to ſink his Spirits too much, and preſuming that his apprehenſions of preſent Death were the effect of the diſorder his Journey had thrown him into, I made uſe of ſome o-*

ther Collects proper at that time, and purpoſely omitted the commendatory Prayer; upon which he called to me, and entreated me to uſe no other than that, and, if I pleas'd, the Lord's Prayer with it, For, *ſaid he*, I am juſt going. *So ſoon as I had done*, Well, *ſaid he*, I now thank thee, and take my leave of thee: I have nothing more to ſay to thee, nor needſt thou ſay any thing to me, thou haſt nothing further to do, but to bid me good night. *And immediately turning himſelf on one ſide, lay ſtill, and ſpoke no more all that night. On* Friday *morning he told me, he wondered to find himſelf alive; however, we perſwaded him to bleed, according to the Dr.'s order the night before, he told us it was to no purpoſe, and had an opinion he ſhould die whilſt he was bleeding; but he added, that he gave up his body to our management, and we might do with it, as we pleaſed: by this time his Friend Dr.* T —— *came in, to whom he talk'd ſenſibly of his caſe, and told him he was ſo well skill'd in his Profeſſion, that he knew very well he could not live out another night. The Dr. was no ſooner gone, but he called me to him, and attempted a Diſcourſe which he was not able to go thro' with; what he aim'd at was ſomething to this purpoſe:* What a poor Creature is Man, if he had hopes only in this Life, he muſt go naked and alone, and without any Friend to accom-

company him to the dark Grave? All that thou wilt ſee of me preſently will be a ſtiff and ſenſeleſs carkaſs: I have already loſt all my thought, I can ſcarce tell what I ſay to thee, I did not juſt now know where I was; now I do; I am in my Bed-chamber; I have no power to command a thought; thou ſhalt in a few moments ſee that they are all periſh'd and gone. *This he repeated ſeveral times with ſome concern; and, in half an hour, they went quite away, and returned no more, for all that afternoon he lay ſtill, only at ten at night he put forth one hand to me, and lifted up the other, and his eyes to Heaven, to ſignifie to me, that he had yet ſome knowledge, tho' his ſpeech was gone, and that he was praying for himſelf, and a little after midnight he breath'd his laſt. I have ſeen many Perſons die, but none like him in all my life: I heard not the leaſt unbecoming word from him in all his illneſs, which was to me the more ſtrange, becauſe I knew the natural heat and eagerneſs of his temper; he ſhew'd not the leaſt ſign of uneaſineſs or diſſatisfaction in his circumſtances, nothing of fondneſs for this World, or any deſire to ſtay longer in it; no manner of fear of death, or doubts about his future good ſtate, but throughout his ſickneſs, and to the laſt minutes that his underſtanding continued, a perfect contempt of all Earthly things, vigorous hopes of a Bleſſed Immortality, and an entire and abſolute reſigna-*

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tion of himſelf to the Will of God. The truth is, his behaviour was enough to make a Man in love with death, and to long for a diſſolution, and at that time it made ſuch an impreſſion upon my ſpirits, that while it laſted, I thought I could with great eaſe have dy'd with him. Having been longer than I intended in my account of the Author, I ſhall leave the following diſcourſes to ſpeak for themſelves. There is evidently a ſpirit of true Piety that breaths in them, and one general aim propos'd to promote a wiſe underſtanding and ſincere practice of Religion: They are publiſh'd as they were found in his ordinary Notes, and not deſigned by him for the Preſs, but if they may do any ſervice to God and Religion, and the Souls of Men, Our Author himſelf would have ventur'd them Abroad into the World, without being any ways concern'd for the defects and imperfections, which may be ſpy'd out in 'em; for, in the proſecution of ſuch noble ends, he has declar'd himſelf ſufficiently arm'd againſt all manner of cenſures whatſoever, and publickly profeſs'd, That it was more ſatisfaction to him to publiſh a few plain and uſefull Diſcourſes, than to have had the ability, or met with the applauſe of writing the Wittieſt or Learnedſt Book in the World.

Pref. to Practical diſc. of Rep.

The First Sermon.

ROM. IX. 14.

What shall we say then? Is there unrighteousness with God? God forbid.

THE Apostle in defence of Christianity, and the Gentiles being received into it, who were Strangers and Aliens, rather than the *Jews*, who were the Children of *Abraham*, and God's peculiar People, having to justifie this, made use of an Instance of God's free disposing his Favours as he pleases, and such as to the *Jews* was an unanswerable President, because upon it all their Priviledges depended, above the rest of the World; the same Children, not of *Abraham* only, but of *Israel*, to whose line the promised Seed was confined, before

they were either of them born, or were in a capacity to do Good or Evil, yet God declared that *Jacob have I loved, and Esau have I hated*, v. 13. and notwithstanding the rights of Primogeniture, yet transmitted this his Love and Hatred down even to their Posterities, the *Israelites*, and the *Edomites*; upon this he seems to be startled with an Objection, rising up from all this, and looking him fully in the Face; *What shall we say then? is their unrighteousness with God? God forbid.* This is so shrewd an absurdity, that if we must be driven to it, 'tis a demonstration against not only Christianity, which he was defending, but against all Religion: For, if God be not a Being of Righteousness and Justice in what he does, who can expect rewards for serving him, or need fear punishment for any wickedness he commits; Virtue and Vice are but empty names, if he has not an impartial regard to them, and his own words are not to be trusted or credited, if we question his Righteonsness and Integrity; if we are not well assured of that in the first place, we can never know but he may deceive us, in whatever he says, or promises to us, nay, all his Revelations may be but like the Heathens deceitful Oracles, to impose upon the credulous, and all his Miracles but tricks of Legerdemain, and slights of an Almighty

hand

hand to deceive us more artificially; but *God forbid*, as the Apostle says, that any such thing should blasphemously be charged upon the great God, or any such Notions formed of him, from whence it is unavoidable to infer them. Tho we can never get the thoughts of him out of our mind, nor wholly take out the Natural Characters of him, that he has imprinted upon us, yet if we so blur, and deface them, with lines drawn from our own ill Tempers or mistaken Apprehensions, as to represent him instead of his Essential Excellencies, and Moral Perfections, which are the brightest Glory that shines all around him, with the black and ugly features of Almighty Rage and Cruelty, Malignant Spite, or Ill Nature; or which may be the same, Imperious, and Arbitrary and Ungoverned Will, conducted by no Principles of Justice, or Goodness, nor acting by any Rules of Right, or Wrong, but as the unaccountable impulses of Fondness or Anger happen to incline him; if we set up such a monstrous Idol in our thoughts with ghastly looks, and terrible visage, instead of the most Perfect, and Righteous, and Blessed God, as we do the greatest dishonour to the Divine Nature, more than if the *Jews* had really set up an Asses head, as they were charged to adore, for the God of *Israel*, so we destroy that

inward love and delight, that hearty eſteem and veneration which the thoughts of ſo excellent and amiable, ſo great and good, and juſt a Being ſhould excite in us, and do a great many other the ſaddeſt miſchiefs to True Religion; as I ſhall ſhew by and by: We make it a deſirable thing even to the beſt of Men, that there were no ſuch Being i'the World, under whoſe Tyranny, for ſuch is Power without Juſtice, they may be made miſerable, as well as others, and all muſt groan under his Iron Scepter, and have reaſon to wiſh they could wreſt it out of his Clutches, but none could kiſs it, or be ſatisfied with it; they might tremble and crouch, and bow before it, offer Prayers, as the *Manichees* to their evil Principles, or build Temples, as the *Romans* to the Fever, or the Plague; they may dread him as an irreſiſtable evil, but never Worſhip, and Honour, and Eſteem him as we ought to do an Infinite God, *i. e.* as an Almighty Goodneſs, or an Eternal Righteouſneſs.

But alas, who did ever deny that God was Righteous? who was ever ſo bold as to charge the great Lord and Creator of the World with the leaſt ſhadow of Unrighteouſneſs? or what pretence, or poſſibility indeed can there be of any ſuch thing? Is not whatever he does therefore righteous, becauſe he does it, let it be what it will?

There

There have been many who have thought he made the greateſt part both of Men and Angels to be eternally miſerable, and doomed them, before they were created, to that wretched State, and that he might have dealt ſo with all the reſt, if he had pleaſed, and yet allow him to have been very righteous; others have thought that he appointed that they ſhould firſt ſin, at leaſt ſome one of them, and from thence he would take occaſion to damn as many of them as he pleaſed, without any regard to their own actions; and this they thought was a better way of diſplaying his Righteouſneſs to us: But who could ever be ſo fooliſh, as to charge God downright with unrighteouſneſs? He that has none above him, to controul or determine him, to give any Laws, or Rules to him, whatever he does according to the purpoſe and pleaſure of his own Will is moſt certainly Righteous.

This is the common and eaſie, but miſtaken account of God's righteouſneſs, which becauſe the Apoſtle here does not make uſe of as he might, and ſo have given a ſhorter anſwer to the ſuppoſed Objection, but rather allows that there is ſome unrighteouſneſs, which is ſo in its own nature, and which therefore could not be charged upon God; for elſe, to ſay with ſuch abhorrence, *God forbid that there be*

unrighteousness with him, would be only to say, God forbid that he should not do what he does, or that he should not will what he wills; when if you suppose that to be what you please, yet the supposing him to will and to do it, makes it to be righteous, and then there would be no need of such a phrase, μὴ γένοιτο, as is here used before hand. I shall endeavour therefore at this time,

1. To lay down a better, and a firmer Notion, and account of God's Righteousness.

2. To show you the usefulness of it, by the consequences of the other Opinion. And,

3. To vindicate the Righteousness of God according to this true Notion of it, and clear it from what either in this Chapter, or any where else may seem to reflect upon it.

1. I shall endeavour to lay down a better and a firmer Notion of God's Righteousness, and that in these Particulars.

1. 'Tis not mere Will and Arbitrary Pleasure that makes God to be Righteous, for that is such a floating and uncertain thing, that it cannot be a fit and stable foundation for Righteousness; mere Power and Will like a violent Wind act always strongly and impetuously, but uncertainly too, sometimes one way, and sometimes the

the quite contrary, as the vapours happen to rise and move it; It will fall under no certain Rules or Calculation, nor can you tell where to have it the next moment, so variable will be ungoverned Will, and so impetuous, when 'tis assisted with Strength and Power, that only gives it weight and force, but determines it not one way or t'other; and if all the effects, and efforts of this were to be called Right, then the doing quite contrary things may happen to be so; for what should hinder mere arbitrary Will from doing one thing at one time, and the quite contrary at another, unless it have something to regulate it? The destroying the Righteous with the Wicked, damning Innocents, and doing all imaginable mischief, shall be called righteousness, if done by the Manichean Evil, and Almighty Principle, for there can be no difference between him and the good one, if what both of them will, be therefore righteous. Whilst righteousness is thus founded in Power and Will, be it never so great, yet if it be not bounded by any certain rules of Right and Wrong, what shall keep it steddy to its self, or prevent its doing at one time what it dislikes, and is therefore unrighteous at another? Like a mighty Torrent, it will rage, and rowl, and break down all before it, if it have no certain Banks, and Current to keep it in;

if Juſtice and Righteouſneſs be only blind Will, without any Scales in her hands to weigh things by, it will be but the ſame with blind Chance and Fortune, and never to be diſtinguiſhed: Did the Divine Nature act by no certain and fixt Rules, it might be called Great and Powerful, but neither Juſt nor Righteous; there could be no ſuch thing, if there were not ſome unalterable Standard of Right and Wrong, and ſome other fixt meaſure of thoſe things, beſides what Arbitrary Will made to it ſelf, according to which the Judge of all the Earth ſhall do right, *Gen.* 18.25.

2. 'Tis God's acting by the unalterable rules of Righteouſneſs and Juſtice, that makes him to be righteous; and the abſolute impoſſibility he ſhould act otherwiſe from the Rectitude and Perfection of his own Nature, there are ἀίδια δίκαια, as *Juſtin Martyr* calls them, things eternally juſt, which are not made, and fictitious things, but are natural and everlaſting, as are the Eternal Truths and Verities of things which were not made ſo at ſuch a time, by the command or will of another, but were fixt from Everlaſting, and were ſo immutably in their own Nature; and theſe are the fixt and unalterable rules of Righteouſneſs which ariſe from the mutual Relations and Reſpects that things have to one another,

and

and are not to be altered even by God himſelf: As common Notions and Mathematical Axioms are founded in the Nature of things themſelves, that the whole is greater then its part, that Equals added to Equals, make Equals, which are Everlaſting Truths, and can never be made otherwiſe, no, not by God himſelf, but are ſo from the mere Ideas and Reſpects of things to one another; ſo there are alſo as Eternal and Immutable rules of Righteouſneſs fixt and determined by the Nature of things, and their Relations to one another, as plain and unalterable, as any Mathematical Verities, and as neceſſary Foundations for Morality and Juſtice, as the others for Science and Demonſtration; ſo that Right and Wrong is in its own Nature, as certain and unchangeable as the Nature of a Circle or a Triangle, and God can no more act contrary to theſe, than he can make the three Angles of a Triangle not equal to two right ones, or two and two not to be four, or one of the parts of a Contradiction not to be falſe.

3. Theſe Eternal, and Immutable Rules of Right and Wrong, by which God acts, and can no more violate, than the Intelligible Natures, or Truths of things, are ſuch as we by our Reaſon can know, and underſtand, and make Judgment by, elſe

else we must never pretend to form a Notion of God by them, or ascribe any such thing as Righteousness to him, and when he so often calls himself *the God Righteous, and Just, who is without any Iniquity* Deut. 32. 4. and *David* could say of him, *Righteous art thou, O Lord, and thy Judgments are Upright*, Ps. 119. 137. it supposes that we have Idea's and conceptions of those things, and that they are true, and agreeable to the things themselves; Nay, when God appeals to us, *Ezek.* 18. 25. to Judge betwixt him and others, whether his ways are equal, or no, 'tis not sure like making a blind man Arbitrator about colours, or a judge of Beauty; We must be supposed to have Power, and Faculties to make Judgment in the Case, and that the Principles of Right and Wrong that are in our minds are agreeable to the nature of things, and to those that God himself acts by: God indeed says in the Prophet *Isa.* 55. 8. *My thoughts are not your thoughts, nor my ways your ways*, the meaning whereof is not, that what we think to be just, and right, and equal, and appears most plainly so to us, yet is quite otherwise in God, and of a different Nature, for this destroys all our Conceptions of any Perfection in God; but the plain sense of that place is, that God was not like the *Jews*, hard to be reconciled and un-

unwilling to forgive injuries, that was ſpoken as an encouragement to the Command juſt before, *Let the wicked forſake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon, for my thoughts, are not your thoughts, nor my ways your ways.* God indeed is infinitely more Wiſe, more Righteous, more Perfect in all things than the beſt of his Creatures, yet we muſt apply the ſame Ideas, and Apprehenſions of thoſe things which we have in our minds to him, that we do to thoſe, as we demonſtrate alike of a greater or a leſſer Circle, or elſe we loſe all notion of his Mercy, Truth, and Righteouſneſs, and when we ſay, God cannot lie, or do what is evil, or unjuſt, we mean the very ſame thing that would be ſo in men, or elſe we muſt mean nothing.

There be many Circumſtances indeed, and different caſes, and conſiderations in the Actions of God to his Creatures, and the Creatures to one another, but yet when they are allow'd for, 'tis by the ſame Scales, as I may ſay, that God weighs out Right which we alſo uſe, only there muſt ſomething on his ſide be put into them ſometimes to make them even, for ſhould they be others unknown to us, we ſhould be wholly at a loſs how to weigh, or meaſure his Actions, or how to account them

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to be Just and Righteous, or how to pronounce that truly of them: But I may say of Righteousness, as *Tully* says of Reason, that it is common both to Man and God, and the very same Signatures and Marks of things, which are Originally in the Divine Mind, are instampt also upon all rational and understanding Beings.

4. God's acting by those Eternal and Immutable Rules of Righteousness, is truly Righteousness in him, tho' he has no superior to give him any Laws and Rules; for Righteousness and all Virtue, the truest and the noblest, is what proceeds rather from a Vital Principle, and inward Energy of the mind, than a set and liveless course of Obedience to Laws and Rules prescribed by another; when a great and brave Mind acts by its own wise and generous Principles, follows the Notices and Dictates of its own All-seeing Understanding, and its Will is always regulated by its own Essential Perfections, and a Natural Rectitude that is in it self, so that it can no more do an ill or unjust thing, than change it self, and put off its own Nature; this is such a Righteousness that has root in it self, and lives, and grows from that innate radical Principle, and differs as much from the other, as a thing that grew into such a shape from a Plastick and Vital Power in it self, does

does from that which was cut and carved by the hand of another. This is that Original Righteouſneſs ſpringing up in the true Fountain, like light in the Sun, whilſt Righteouſneſs in us, tho' it be of the ſame Nature, is but like that in the Air derived from it, and mixt with a great deal of darkneſs and a mere obſervance of Precepts and Rules, as they are preſcribed by another, and the acting from a Righteous and Inward Principle in ones own mind, are as different as the Clock-Work Motion, and flying of *Regiomontanus*'s Eagle, from ſome Wheels and Wires, and the Natural Motion of a living one, from its own Spirits and Muſcles, and the force and ſpring of inward life.

Thus is Righteouſneſs in God truly Righteouſneſs, tho' he has no Superior to move or determine him: And thus I have laid down what I conceive the true Notion and Fountain of Gods Righteouſneſs, which tho' it may be too deep for ſome to ſee to the bottom, yet it ſtands upon the firmer ground, and is immovable.

2. I ſhall now ſhew you the uſefulneſs of it, from the miſchievous Conſequences of the other opinion, That Gods Righteouſneſs conſiſts only in Arbitrary and Ungoverned Will.

1. That

1. That takes very much off from our Obligation to Right, if there be no ſuch thing in the Divine Nature; by Righteouſneſs may be meant a very large and comprehenſive Virtue, that contains almoſt all others under it, and there muſt be the ſame Reaſon and Foundation of thoſe as of this, and if we can conceive the God we worſhip to be without thoſe, it will greatly abate our eſteem of them and obligation to them; if we conceive that great mind is happy and perfect without thoſe, we have reaſon to think our own may be ſo too, for whatever thoughts we have of God, they muſt be the Standard and Meaſure to us of all Perfection. It is a very natural Conſequence which St. *John* makes, 1 Ep. 2. 29. if ye know that he is Righteous, ye know that every one that doeth Righteouſneſs is born of him: if Righteouſneſs be founded in the Divine Nature, then whoever is truly Righteous, is both like unto God and beloved by him as a Child of its Parent. God cannot but love and be pleaſed with what is ſo agreeble to himſelf, and bears his Divine Image and Reſemblance upon it; for the ſame Reaſon that he loves himſelf, and takes infinite complacency and ſatisfaction in his own Perfections he will love alſo thoſe who are partakers of the ſame Divine Life and

and Nature, and are Righteous as he is Righteous, that is, Righteous Men, as he is a Righteous God, for that the *Righteous Lord ſhould love Righteouſneſs*, as the *Pſalmiſt* ſpeaks, *Pſ.* 11. 7. is the reſult of his own Natural and Eſſential Perfections, but there is no reaſon why he ſhould not love any thing, even the contrary, if he were not truly Righteous himſelf, and his love depended upon mere Arbitrary Will, without regard to any thing elſe.

2. This has been therefore the ground of all Superſtition and undue Worſhip of God, and of the great miſtakes that are in Religion, the conceiving God to be a mere Great and Arbitrary Being, and only Abſolute and Almighty Will, without the Perfection, and the line of Righteouſneſs; from hence Men have hoped to pleaſe him, and procure his favour with outward Pomp and Solemnity, with multitude of Sacrifices, and great Preſents and Oblations, with Bowings, and Cringes, and Proſtrations before him, with bended Knees, and empty Words, and a courſe of External Performances, without any true and inward Righteouſneſs; they have imagined a ſort of Religious flattery would take with him, and that it was enough to ſooth up his greatneſs with ſome officious addreſſes, and to make their court

to

to him with a set of hollow and affected Complements; by these they thought God was sufficiently obliged, and took great pleasure in them, like some vain and foolish and haughty Mortals: Indeed was God such an one as themselves, or as they imagine, he might be so, but if he be a Being Essentially Righteous, and Holy himself, 'tis then not to be hoped, that any thing will commend us to him, or procure his Favour but a Righteous Mind; without that, let Men dispute as long as they please, no Man can be Elected or Justified, or think to be saved by a Righteous God; nor can it be worth while to contrive any Tricks or Devices whatsoever, which has been the great business of false Religion, by which Men would fain please God, and be very Religious, without being truly Righteous; without this neither Pennance nor Absolution, Whipping, or going Bare-foot, Pardons, or Indulgences, Masses, or Pilgrimages will signifie any thing, and whatever we trust or rely on, wherever we ground our Hopes, and make comfortable Reserves and Expectations to our selves, will most certainly deceive us without Righteousness.

Those who think God is only infinite Will, acting Arbitrarily, without observing any rules of Righteousness, if their Constitution be

ſuch that they are apt to have gay and pleaſing Ideas and Images of things Repreſented to their Minds; they are inclined to think that God will be eaſily pleaſed with them for very little Matters, and ſo fall into that ſanguine Superſtition which I mentioned before, or think perhaps that he has Choſen and Elected them from Eternity, and their names are written in the Book of Life; but if their blood be thick, and their fancy blacker, then they imagine God to be Severe and Revengeful, hard to be pleaſed, and eaſily provoked, and implacable when he is ſo: and with theſe ſad and dreadful Apprehenſions, his Mind is always haunted as with frightful Spectres, and he comes to the Temples, as *Plutarch* ſays, as if 'twere to the Dens of Wild Beaſts, or the Neſts of Dragons, for he conceives that God is as hurtful as any of thoſe Creatures: ſo there with a ſcared Countenance and a perplext Mind, the timorous Worſhipper offers up his Child perhaps, or the reeking Bowels of ſome Humane Sacrifice, or ſometimes his own Blood to the God he Worſhips, and thus hopes to appeaſe the cruel *Moloch* and the fierce *Cerberus* with ſome Morſel or other, that may ſatisfy his Ravenous indignation; all which miſerable Superſtition, and miſtakes in Religion, which were ſo Notorious in the Heathen

World, and not quite got out of the Christian Church, are for ever prevented by this clear and firm Principle, That God is a Being truly Righteous himself, and that he neither loves nor hates others, but as they are, or are not so; for Righteousness excludes both partial fondness and unreasonable displeasure.

3. It makes all Religion to be a positive Arbitrary thing, and takes off from its intrinsick Worth and Excellency, as having no Foundation in the real goodness of what is commanded, nor in the Nature of God, but only in his Arbitrary Will and Pleasure. Whereas this it is, that truly commends Religion to the Minds of considering Men, that it is the obliging us to such Laws as are Eternally and Unalterably Good, from the nature of things; which do naturally produce good Effects to our selves and the World, and are the necessary causes of our happiness, and that therefore God has laid them upon us, not as a Yoke he would have us submit to, meerly because we ought to be subject to him, but as they are good in themselves, and the necessary means of our Happiness: that his Commands are but the Copies of his own Original and wise Reason, the Transcript of his own Eternal Righteousness and Perfections; and that the Righteousness he

he Commands us, is taken from God himself, and is a lively Pattern and Exemplar of his own Nature, and Essential Righteousness.

This does extremely commend Religion and Righteousness to us, that 'tis not only founded in the Will, but the Nature of God too, and is not only interwoven with the very make of our Humane Nature, but derived from the Natural Perfections of God, as the Fountain of it; that 'tis not an imperious restraint upon us from humoursom and boundless Will, that had no antecedent Reason thus to limit and confine us; but that all the Laws of Righteousness, besides the Stamp and Impress that Heaven has fixt upon them, are of intrinsick Worth and Value, and that their own goodness is the firmest sanction and the truest reason of their obligation.

4. The having such a Conception of God, is very dishonourable to God, and uncomfortable to our selves, if we consider no other effects of it upon our lives; 'tis a robbing him of one of the Noblest Perfections of his Nature, of the richest Jewels of his Crown: and the most resplendent Justice and Righteousness are the greatest Excellencies of a Governor, of a great and powerful Being, and his power without those will be only a great-

er miſchief. There is nothing that all Men do more admire and commend than impartial Juſtice in thoſe who are above them, becauſe 'tis a guard and protection of every Man, a fence ſet about him and all his Intereſts, and nothing is more manifeſt than the influence which Juſtice has upon the good of the World; ſo that every body when he thinks on a *Cato* or an *Ariſtides* bleſſes him in his heart, and ſpeaks well of him with his Lips. And what we think ſuch a Perfection in men and ſuch an object of Eſteem there, if we deny it to God, we ſtop one of the main ſtreams of Honour, that ſhould flow from him, and cut off the brighteſt Ray of the Divine Luſtre: neither can we give that Honour that belongs to him, if we ſtrip him of thoſe Perfections, any more than we can ſee the Sun, if we diſrobe it of its Light, or admire the face that we have mangled and deformed: There muſt be ſuch a congruity in the Object, like Charms fitted to attract our Paſſions, and excite our Eſteem, or elſe we can no more love and honour than we can taſte with our Eyes, and ſee with our Palate: and mere Power is no more an object of Love and Honour, but as 'tis an Inſtrument to do us good, than an Earthquake or a Clap of Thunder; it will amaze and affright us, and put us into a Conſternation, but never

never bring us heartily to Honour and Esteem it. We shall dread such a Being as has us under, and can crush us as he pleases, just as a little Bird does the Eagle, when its Claws are upon it; and we shall live in as much terror and confusion, and uncertain destractions of mind from such thoughts of God, as a Slave does under his Mercileſs Patron, who knows not what hardship he shall suffer next, whether he shall be Sold, or Starved, or Murdered. If when we know that his Power is Absolute and Irresistable, and have no security from the goodness of his Nature, that he shall not use it to rack and torture us, and do us mischief unless we do that which Justly deserves it; we may then be glad if we could with the *Epicureans*, free our minds from the melancholy thoughts of such a Cruel and Over-ruling *Nemesis*, and must never hope to come to perfect Ease, and Tranquility, and repose of Mind, till we had got rid of the fears of such an Invisible *Mormo*. But God forbid that this should be the case of Mankind; no 'tis the most equal and impartial Justice that rules the World, that Administers all affairs with the greatest Justice and Righteousness, whom we have no reason to dread, unless we do base and wicked things, that disorder and do mischief: then indeed he

will ſeverely Chaſtiſe and Puniſh us, but elſe there is not the ſeverity or injuſtice or hard uſage that we need ever fear from him, no more than a Child from the moſt indulgent Parent, or a Subject from the beſt natured Prince and Governor. There was never in all his vaſt Kingdom and Empire of the World, in all his long and laſting Government, any the leaſt Unrighteouſneſs that could ever be charged upon it, nor has any, the meaneſt Perſon, reaſon to complain of any the leaſt injuſtice done it, nor ever ſhall have; which is the third and laſt Particular.

3. To Vindicate the Righteouſneſs of God, according to this true account of it, and clear it from what either in this Chapter, or any where elſe, may ſeem to reflect upon it, which will be great eaſe to our minds, and confirm what has been aſſerted before: and this I ſhall do by laying down briefly two or three Principles, that will meet with almoſt all caſes and all objections about this matter, for I muſt not deſcend now to Particulars.

1. That Arbitrary and Unlimited goodneſs is no inſtance of Unrighteouſneſs, as if a Prince think fit to ſhow extraordinary Favours to ſome of his Subjects more than others, to raiſe them to higher Places and Preferments, or to give them ſome greater

greater Privileges and Advantages under him, he is not to be called unjuſt or unrighteous if he do no wrong to his other Subjects, tho' they do not taſte ſo largely of his Favour and Bounty: for a Power and Prerogative to do good, is Unlimited, only Juſtice, like the Angel to *Abraham*, ſtops its hand from doing miſchief. And this was the caſe in this difficult Chapter, of God's beſtowing the Privileges of the Goſpel, and Chriſtianity on the Gentiles, rather than the *Jews*; *As the Gentiles, which followed not after Righteouſneſs, have attained to Righteouſneſs, even the Righteouſneſs that is of Faith, but* Iſrael, *which followed after the Law of Righteouſneſs, hath not attained to the Law of Righteouſneſs*, v. 30. 31. tho that was wholly by their own Fault: And this principle the *Jews* had no reaſon to diſallow, who had before reapt ſo much benefit by it; it being the only ground why God was more gracious to them, than the reſt of the World, and that he ſtill allows ſome Perſons and Countries much greater means of Grace than others, tho' there are none who want what is ſufficient for them.

2. That God, as abſolute Lord, Proprietor and Creator of the World, has ſo vaſt a Right over his Creatures, as to put 'em into what condition he pleaſes, that is not worſe than the having no Be-

ing, for that is but giving 'em a leſſer good. But to put them into ſuch a ſtate as it were deſirable rather to be annihilated, than to be ſo miſerable; to do this without ſome fault of theirs that ſhall deſerve this as a puniſhment, is againſt the plaineſt Axioms and Rules of Right and Juſtice, and is to take more from a Creature, than he gives it, and ſo make himſelf as it were a debtor to it. There cannot be any ſuch thing as unlimited Right, no, not in God over his Creatures, for all Right ſuppoſes ſome Rules to bound and limit it, the tranſgreſſing of which may be ſuppoſed, and therefore may be wrong and injury, and here is the πρῶτον ψεῦδος of the Predeſtinarians: but to diſpoſe of Kingdoms in this World and tranſfer 'em from the *Canaanites* to the *Jews*, to give others an expreſs command to make the Jewels of the *Egyptians* their own, to command the life of a Child at the hand of its Parents, as a Sacrifice to him that gave it, and the like; this is a right belongs to the abſolute Lord, Proprietor, and Creator of the whole World; and as ſuch he may give *Jacob* a more fruitfull Land and greater Kingdom, and ſhow his love to him rather than to *Eſau* that way.

3. That

3. That punishment and severity upon sinners, which is necessary for publick good, and for the Ends of Government, is not to be called Unrighteous, be it never so great: and I can never believe that God does ever inflict more, no, not in the Eternal torments of Hell, nor has any other end in that, or any other punishment and severity, than to give a sufficient sanction to his Laws; than wisely to Govern, and keep the world in order, and procure with the best Advantage, the Welfare and Happiness of all the Beings that are in it; and whatsoever punishments are necessary to that end are upon that account Just and Righteous; since that is the only true measure by which a Just proportion can be assigned between the fault and the punishment. I know not what they mean who talk of any sort of Vindictive Justice in God different from this, as if there were any revengefull Passion in him to be satisfied by the miseries of his Creatures, or he took any other pleasure in the punishment of them, but meerly the pleasure of doing Justice; 'tis this is a further assurance to us of Gods Righteousness, that a Being so great and powerfull and self sufficient, can have no such passions as spring up in weak and impotent minds, nor be tempted to do any injustice becaus that pro-

proceeds always from weakneſs and imbecillity.

But I muſt enlarge no further on theſe particulars, I hope what has been ſaid already will give ſome ſatisfaction to our minds, that there is no Unrighteouſneſs in the great God. But he that is infinitely Great, is therefore infinitely Juſt and Righteous, becauſe he can have no Mean and Unrighteous deſigns, either for himſelf, or againſt others, ſo that Juſtice and Righteouſneſs is neceſſarily joined with Almighty Power, and it muſt be a thought full of dread and horror that can conceive it poſſible to have them parted and ſeparated; but in Truth, where there is any one infinite Perfection there muſt be all, and therefore we have the ſame Evidence from reaſon of Gods being Righteous, as of his being Almighty, or of his being at all; and they who from ſome miſtaken places of Scripture and Revelation endeavour to Repreſent God under another Notion and Character, deſtroy that true natural Notion and Conception of a God, upon which all Revelation is built, and which muſt be previous and antecedent to it; and make Religion, and the thoughts of a God, which is the moſt cheerfull and comfortable thing in the World, to be an hideouſly black and melancholy Superſtition; and as this may reaſonably be

be the cauſe of a great many's becoming Atheiſts, who had rather believe there was no ſuch Being as a God, than that he was ſuch an Unrighteous being as ſome would repreſent him, ſo it would tempt any Man to wiſh to be ſo if he could, and if it were in his Power. *But what ſhall we ſay then, is there Unrighteouſneſs with God? God forbid.*

The

The Second Sermon.

MATTH. XI. 29. laſt Part.

And ye ſhall find reſt unto your Souls.

OUR Bleſſed Saviour in the foregoing verſes, was exhorting all Perſons to embrace his Religion, who were under any load and Burthen, Trouble, and uneaſineſs of Mind, and he promiſes to give them eaſe and refreſhment. *Come unto me all ye that Labour and are heavy Laden, and I will give you reſt.*

This is a great Undertaking and Propoſal, and very deſirable and inviting to Mankind. The Diſeaſes and Diſorders and Uneaſineſſes of the Mind, are a great many more than thoſe of the Body, and it

it is a more Divine thing and more owing to the Gods as *Tully* ſpeaks, to find out proper Phyſick and Remedies to Cure them than the other; Our Saviour propoſes his Religion and his Example, as the means to do this, *Take my Yoke upon you, and learn of me.* There were a great many Sects of Philoſophers of old, in which the wiſeſt Men always aimed at this Tranquility and eaſe of Mind, and propoſed their Doctrine as the way to attain it, and gave admirable Rules of living up to ſuch heights of Vertue, as ſhould make Men eaſie and happy in all conditions, even the worſt that could befall them; and a great many of them it muſt be confeſſed were as great Examples, as Teachers of theſe, ſuch as *Pythagoras, Socrates, Plato, Zeno,* and others, who were the natural Prophets and Apoſtles of the Heathen World, and taught 'em the beſt Wiſdom and Vertue, and the beſt Directions how to attain the trueſt and perfecteſt happineſs, they knew humane Nature to be capable of. Revelation, and eſpecially the Religion of Chriſt, has done the ſame with much greater advantage; hath ſhown us a right Notion of Happineſs, and all that conduces to it, and has both enlarged the view and proſpect of it in another World, and improved the Method of acquiring and obtaining it, and con-

confirmed that good old Notion, that it lies only in Vertue, that nothing elſe can make a Man happy, and this alone can do it. Our Saviour as well as moſt of the Philoſophers were to all appearance none of the happieſt men in the World, they were poor and mean and deſpiſed and contemned, and had very little or none of thoſe things, in which the World places Happineſs, Riches and Honours, and Pleaſures, which we ſo fondly admire and eſteem and purſue after, as the happieſt things that are to be enjoyed, and think thoſe are not in earneſt or only envious and ill-natur'd becauſe they cannot attain them, who ſpeak otherwiſe of them. Our Saviour propoſes no Worldly advantages to his followers, but rather the quite contrary, and yet he Preaches happineſs to them even at preſent, and joyns the Beatitudes and the Chriſtian Vertues together in his Sermon, as inſeparable Companions; and tho' he left his Apoſtles in a World full of afflictions and ſeeming miſeries, yet he tells them, he leaves his Peace with them, *John* 14. 27. Such a Peace as was proper for him to give and them to receive, not as the World giveth, but ſuch an one as ſhould have this effect upon them, as that their hearts ſhould not be troubled nor be afraid, that no evils ſhould diſturb or take away this Peace of mind,

mind, that in him they might have Peace, tho' in the World they had tribulation, *John* 16. 33. and that they might always be of good cheer becauſe he had overcome the World. 'Tis a great thing which he here offers to Mankind, be they never ſo weary and oppreſs'd with cares, and troubles, labour under never ſo many ſeeming evils and afflictions here, have never ſuch great loads and oppreſſions upon their Minds and Spirits, that make them uneaſie to themſelves, and very miſerable within; that if they come to his Religion, and take his Yoke upon them, follow the Rules and precepts of his Doctrine, and become of ſuch a temper and ſpirit as he was, that they ſhall certainly meet with eaſe and comfort, relief, and refreſhment, *And ye ſhall find reſt to your Souls.* This Reſt and Tranquility of Mind is the greateſt Happineſs in the World; what Philoſophy aimed and purſued after, what we ſhould endeavour to attain above every thing, and what if we once perfectly reach, nothing could ever make us the leaſt miſerable; what alone is worth ſeeking after, by all the Rules of Philoſophy and Religion, and without which, nothing is worth aiming or ſeeking after, and laſtly what Chriſt and Chriſtianity propoſe, and can bring us to.

How

How and by what ways they do it, or what is the beſt means to attain it, ſhall be my chief buſineſs to ſhew; as to what it is, or wherein it conſiſts, that we know better by inward ſenſation or preception, than by any deſcription or Ideas of it; we feel what eaſe is both in Mind and Body, and we have a quick Senſe of pain and uneaſineſs in both; Indolency of Body, and Tranquility of Mind, are known by all to be great and deſirable things. The pleaſures of our compounded nature, and ſuch as have a near Analogy and Reſemblance with one another, however we are forced to expreſs and deſcribe one by the other, they are not meer Negatives, ſuch as ſuppoſe only no Senſe of pain or evil, which may belong to one that is aſleep or ſtupified, or to a Stock or a Stone: but a poſitive Senſe of what is agreeble to its Nature and the right uſe of its powers and faculties, and an Enjoyment or Perception of a good or Pleaſure, ſuitable to them, with an intire freedom at the ſame time from what is contrary and unagreeable, painfull and troubleſome and uneaſie. The very abſence of what is painfull and uneaſie, brings a great pleaſure, becauſe Nature then enjoys it ſelf, and has its own ſuitable perceptions without any diſturbance. What Diſeaſes and Pains and Tortures are to the Body, the ſame are

diſorders and troubles to the mind, from tormenting paſſions and uneaſie Thoughts, from Fear, and Guilt, and Sorrow, the apprehenſion of evil as preſent, or coming upon it; we want words to expreſs what we know and conceive of this: and Peace of mind is oppoſed to all things that weary and diſeaſe, and diſquiet and diſturb it whatever they are, whether the Evils and Troubles and Afflictions of this World, or Paſſions and Diſorders from within, inordinate and irregular Deſires and inward Commotions contrary to right Reaſon, or the more dreadfull terrors and horrors of ſome greater evil than any in this World. The mind, it is certain, has a quicker and more ſmart, and cutting ſenſe of Pain by theſe, than the Body from any Diſeaſe. The Diſeaſes and Maladies, Diſorders and Pains of the mind, are greater and harder to be cured, than thoſe of the Body. Wiſdom, and Philoſophy, Virtue and Religion, are the proper Phyſick, the true Cure and Remedy of them, the only things that can bring the mind to that Good, Sound, and Healthfull State, that it ſhall be well and rightly diſpoſed in its due Frame and Craſis, fitted to perform its proper Operations, and enjoy its agreeable Pleaſures; the Pleaſure and Enjoyment of its ſelf, and its own Wiſe, and Vertuous, and good Thoughts, the

pleaſant

pleaſant Hopes and Expectations of Religion, and all the ſuperadded Enjoyments from thence, that Revelation aſſures us of; beſides what are natural to it from the right Exerciſe of its own Powers, ſuch as Peace of Conſcience upon Pardon of Sin, inward Senſe of God's Favour, or his lifting up the light of his Countenance upon us, Joy in the Holy Ghoſt, and rejoycing in hope of the Glory that ſhall be revealed: Theſe are ſuch Pleaſures and Enjoyments of Mind, as are beyond Nature, but within Chriſtianity, which raiſe and exalt the Soul to ſomething beyond that Tranquility and Calmneſs, and Serenity of Mind which Philoſophy ſo talkt of. This improves it higher, and raiſes a more noble ſtructure of Happineſs to our Souls, but upon the ſame Foundation, having the ſame Bottom to build upon, the inward Eaſe and Peace and reſt of the Mind, which is the greateſt thing we can deſire, or is worth our attaining.

To be very eaſy always within, to have Peace and Quiet in our own Breaſts, to be diſturbed with no uneaſie Thoughts, no tumultuous Paſſions, no Fear, Grief, or Sorrow, no carking Care, or corroding Trouble; to be ruffled with no diſcompoſure, have no dark Clouds hanging over our Thoughts, no Storms or Tempeſts raging within our Breaſts; this is Tranquility

of Mind an inward Calm, and Serenity of Thoughts, contrary to that Temper of mind, *Which is like the troubled Sea, which cannot rest*, to which the Scripture compares it, *Isa.* 57. 20. neither apt to be much raised or too much depressed, *Nec attollens se unquam, nec deprimens*, as *Seneca* speaks, *Sed semper æquali, & placido statu*, always even and in a placid state, *propitius sibi, & sua lætus aspiciens*, pleased with its self and its own thoughts, and having nothing to sowre and disorder it self, or infuse a poysonous bitterness into it. This is that good state of Soul, that rest which is a greater Happiness than all the World can afford, which he that has, will be Happy in whatever Circumstances or Condition he is, and which we might certainly find by Religion and Christianity, if we lived up to the Principles and Duties of it; *Take my Yoke upon you, and learn of me, and ye shall find rest to your Souls.*

I shall premise a few cautions to prevent any mistake in this matter, and the better to state and explain it.

Then show how we may by the help and means of Religion, attain to this Rest, Peace, and Tranquility of Mind.

1. First then, I do not pretend that Religion and Virtue, will set Men free from all the evils of this World, and be a protection against any manner of outward Troubles

bles or Calamities ever falling upon us; This cannot be, *For Man is born to Trouble as the Sparks fly upwards*, *Job* 5. 7. They are a great many of them natural and neceſſary and unavoidable, and God muſt alter the nature of Things and the nature of the World, and work perpetual Miracles to free us always from them; to have our Bodies ſubject to no Diſeaſes and Indiſpoſitions, our Eſtates ſubject to no Loſſes and Caſualities, or Children or Friends not ſubject to Death, or to be taken away from us, this is impoſſible, and what no good Man muſt expect; that the Rain or Drought ſhould not ſometimes ſpoil his Corn, the Sea ſhipwrack his Goods or Veſſel, the Fire burn his Houſe as well as anothers: theſe common misfortunes which happen alike to all, and a great many Loſſes from the fraud and injuſtice of others, as well as abundance of natural evils ariſing from the Mechaniſm of our ſelves and the World; theſe the moſt Virtuous cannot expect to be exempted from, but like Travellers through this World, they muſt all paſs thro' the common Road with others, and ſometimes meet with bad and unpleaſant way, and now and then with a ſhower that may fall upon 'em: but the Religious Man is however much better provided againſt thoſe, againſt the common and unavoidable e-

vils of life, than another who is but equally ſubject to them; his Mind is Armed againſt all the darts of Fortune, and they ſhall not enter ſo deep, nor ſmart ſo grievouſly as to the wicked; he has ſomething within to ſupport him under all the Calamities and Afflictions of this World, a good God, a good Conſcience, and a good Proſpect, and Hopes of Heaven, when a wicked Man has none of thoſe to keep him up, but muſt wholly ſink and fall under them. The one will have the Peace of his Mind, and a Comfort within, that ſhall pour Oyl and Balſam into all the Wounds of Fortune and make Afflictions more eaſie and tolerable; but the other will increaſe the ſmart of them, by his wickedneſs, that will then lie heavier upon him, when his Spirit is oppreſſed with other troubles, the load of thoſe and of his ſins both will be inſupportable to him, and when his mind is ſore by its inward guilt, every hard thing from without, will more pinch and gall him. A good Man may keep this Peace of Mind under any Worldly afflictions, but a bad Man cannot.

2. Neither will Religion make all things equal as to the outward Happineſs of this life, ariſing from Mens different States and Conditions and unequal Circumſtances in this World. It may be allowed that there is a proper and real good, in the Plenty, Riches, and Conveniences of life, and that a good Man

Man is not quite ſo happy that wants them, as if he had 'em; but they might be an acceſſion, a ſmall Addition to his more true and greater Happineſs of Vertue, tho' that be infinitely more Great and Valuable and Deſirable, yet I do not know that Religion takes away or diſallows the other; we may therefore both Lawfully Deſire and Endeavour to make our outward Circumſtances in this World as good, and eaſie, and comfortable as we can, within the bounds of Vertue, and 'tis both Natural and Lawful to do it; and it borders, I doubt, upon Hypocriſie or Superſtition to pretend the contrary, and is always confuted by a contrary Deſire and Practice in thoſe who have talked otherwiſe. But ſtill a good Man can be contented and eaſie in a very mean and ſtrait Condition, if Providence allots this to him; and he will not Diſquiet or Diſturb himſelf, for what he ſees others enjoy, if God ſees not fit for him to have them: and tho he can allow a leſſer good and a proper uſe and conveniency, and ſome ſmall Happineſs perhaps as to this life, to belong to thoſe outward things in reſpect of the Wants and Neceſſities, and the State we are in here, which made *Ariſtotle* and the *Peripateticks* put the *Externa Bona* into the Ingredients of compleat Happineſs; yet he can be very Happy with a few of thoſe

as knowing that *Man's Life consisteth not in abundance*, as Christ says, *Luk.* 12. 15. and that a few things will suffice nature; and having Food and Raiment, which is the Apostles, as well as Natures competency, he can be content and make up a Happiness to himself out of the better and more essential Parts and Ingredients of it, to wit, Vertue and Wisdom, and a good Mind, without those Appendages and Ornaments, Trimmings, and Garnishings of it, which we call outward Happiness and Prosperity. I am not for maintaining that Stoical Paradox, That a virtuous Man was thereby Rich, and a King, and every thing that's Great: They might as well have said also, he is always Strong and Healthfull, tho' 'tis plain, he may be both Sickly and Poor; and his greatest Virtues may take away neither of those evils, and their contraries may be allowed to be both goods in a lower Sence and so Desir'd by us: but he will be Happier a Thousand times without those, than without his Vertue; they can never make him truly Happy without that, but he may be Happy without those, by the Peace and Comfort, the Firmness and Goodness of his own Mind, altho' if he had them too, they might add something to his present Happiness and Good Condition, this I will not Cynically deny. Nor yet, 3. That

3. That Religion will quite alter his bodily Temper, any more than his Worldly Circumſtances, but a good Man may labour under an unhappy Temper, and ill Craſis, and Diſpoſition of Blood and Humours: His Wiſe and Vertuous Soul may *male habitare*, be lodged not only in a Deformed, but a Sickly, and Unhealthfull, or otherwiſe ill-framed Body; A natural Sulphur and Choler may lodge in his Blood, that may be too apt to Fire and heat him, or too much dull and heavy Phlegm, may clog his Spirits, and make them Liſtleſs and Unactive, and not riſe to Warmth, and fervor in his Religious Duties; the Salts that keep the Humours from putrefying may make them too Sharp or Sowre, and apt to make a Temper too Fretfull and Peeviſh; or a black melancholy Humour may be thus produced and become Predominant that will diſorder the Spirits, and fill the Head and other Parts with dark Vapours, and irregular Ferments, and draw a Cloud of Darkneſs and Diſconſolateneſs over the Brain, and even the Soul it ſelf. Now Religion will not, nor cannot cure this any more than any other Bodily Diſeaſes, and he that is afflicted with them, muſt bear them, as he would the Gout or Stone, or any other Diſeaſe that is incident to us; but ſince theſe affect the Mind more, and the Mind alſo by its cloſe

cloſe Union and Re-action upon the Body, does in great meaſure raiſe and excite, or abate and allay thoſe; therefore it is a great part of Human Vertue, and a proper Work of Religion, to take as much care as can be of thoſe natural Paſſions, which are cauſed in us by thoſe different Humours and Temperaments of Body; for all Anger and Luſt, and the other Bodily Paſſions that are ſo troubleſome both to our ſelves and others, ariſe from them. The Soul is the ſame in all Men, not more inclined to any of thoſe Paſſions by its Original make and nature, than the contrary; they all ariſe from our Body, and our lower Nature, and are the reſults of that, and therefore they are in Brutes, we often ſee, as well as Men: but the Soul by being Vitally united to the Body, has a Preception and Senſation of them, and ſuch thoughts are neceſſarily cauſed in it by them. Now neither the firſt motions of the Body, nor firſt thoughts of the Soul upon them are ſinful, becauſe they are both neceſſary, but the Soul has a Power within it ſelf, either to conſent, or not conſent to theſe Bodily Motions and Inclinations, which we call Paſſions; and this Principle of the Soul, we call the Will, I do not mean a power to conſent to their firſt riſing, or not riſing in us, that is often neceſſary and un-

unavoidable, and ſo not within the power of the Soul, but perfectly unvoluntary; but then whether it ſhall continue ſuch a thought, that is excited upon ſuch a Paſſion, at leaſt continue it ſo far as to approve and like it, and conſent to it, and put it into Act if it can, and actually execute it, and let it produce any outward and laſting Effects; this is in the power of the Soul, and herein lies the great Exerciſe of its Virtues, in governing and ſubduing the Paſſions, and mortifying the carnal Luſts and Bodily Inclinations; if it yields to thoſe ſo as to commit any Unlawfull Actions, or any ſin in purſuance of them, then it fulfills the Luſts of the Fleſh, and walks after the Fleſh, and is carnal, and *carnally minded*, in St. *Paul*'s phraſe, *Rom.* 8. 6. *but if thro' the Spirit*, and by help of Religion, *it does mortify theſe deeds of the Body, it ſhall live*, v. 13. If it ſuffer no ſin to reign in its mortal Body, nor give way to thoſe Paſſions and Luſts, ſo as to commit ſin by them, but with the greateſt care and pains keep them within the bounds of Reaſon and Religion, then it does *Crucifie the Fleſh with the Affections and Luſts*, *Galat.* 5. 24. not that they muſt become quite dead and extinct, ſo that we feel no motions of them: no; they may remain in the beſt and moſt regenerate Man,

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as to ſome inward motions of Concupiſcence, but they are not ſinfull unleſs they *conceive*, *i. e.* are conſented to in the heart and *bring forth ſin* in the life, *James* 1. 15. Now Religion is ſo to Govern, and keep under all theſe Paſſions and bodily inclinations, that they run not into Sin, but it cannot quite cut them up and extirpate them; it is to improve and perfect Nature by Grace, but not to deſtroy it: Theſe Paſſions therefore, cauſed by thoſe Bodily Humours and Tempers which we are naturally inclined to; theſe which are one of the greateſt cauſes of the troubles and diſorders of the mind, and which bring the greateſt Uneaſineſs and Perturbation to it, and rob it of that Evenneſs and Calmneſs, and Tranquility, which is the great Happineſs of it: theſe Religion cannot ſo wholly remove and take away as that we ſhould be perfectly free from them, and from all the motions and riſings of them; but it will and muſt ſo far ſubdue and conquer them, as that they neither have Sinful and Unlawful Effects upon others, nor ſo far diſorder our ſelves, as to ſpoil and deſtroy the Peace, and Reſt, and Quiet of our minds. I do not mean that they ſhould never diſturb us, for ſo they will a little, as often as we feel them; but not to that degree, as to take away the Peace and Tranquillity of our mind,

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and to deſtroy the habit and temper of it; if they do, we can never be Happy with them. How Religion cures them, and to what degree, it muſt overcome them, I ſhall conſider afterwards; at preſent I ſhall only obſerve that Religion does not wholly deſtroy and root them up, nor alter our bodily Temper and Conſtitution; but a good Man ſtill lies open to the firſt motions of Anger, Peeviſhneſs, Melancholy, and the like, and may never be quite otherwiſe, any more than alter his Complexion, or his Stature, and make his Hair White or black: but he may have Peace in his Mind, and Reſt in his Soul, notwithſtanding that in the rational Frame, and Habit, and Temper of it, founded upon the Hopes and Principles of Religion, theſe are troubleſome and uneaſie to him, and will alſo affect his Mind, as well as any other bodily Pain and Diſeaſe; but yet his Reſt and Tranquility, may be conſiſtent with both thoſe: for 'tis a rational intellectual Senſe and Perception in the Soul, which depends upon Principles and Rules, and not upon mere Temper and Mechaniſm of body; for then ill Weather, as well as an ill body would alter and deſtroy it.

I come now to ſhow how we may attain it, which is the moſt conſiderable thing of all, and when we have it, we ſhall better underſtand it, than by any other account of it; like Health we know what it is, tho' we cannot ſo well deſcribe it, and like eaſe and pleaſure, we can beſt Judge of it by feeling it: 'Tis as *Tully* calls it, *ſanitas animi*, the Health and Soundneſs and good Temper of the Soul, and when the Soul wants it, it is Sick and under a Diſeaſe, in Pain and Diſorder. We all know how good and ſweet a thing health and eaſe is both of Body and Mind, ſo that there need not many words to commend them; how to get it, and preſerve it, and recover it when it is loſt, is the greateſt Queſtion.

Our Saviour here tells us we may *find reſt to our Souls*, and obtain this Peace and Tranquility of mind. I ſhall conſider what the means are, and by what ways Religion does effect this in the following particulars.

1. Religion teaches us that Happineſs lies chiefly in our Mind, that that is the proper ſeat of it, and that it lies not in things without us, but is a Treaſure in our own Breaſts, ſomething within our ſelves, which belongs to our Souls, and conſiſts in the Perfection, Improvement and Enjoyment of them; this is in other words cal-

called the Salvation of the Soul, reſtoring it to its loſt Happineſs, and freeing it from the Miſeries and Evils that ſin brought upon it. 'Tis the great and proper buſineſs of Religion, to ſave the Soul or make it Happy, which is done by making it Wiſe and Vertuous, by raiſing it to its trueſt Perfection, by improving it with Vertuous Habits and Diſpoſitions, and bringing it to a Godlike, Heavenly Frame and Diſpoſition, and ſo cultivating, and fitting it for the greateſt Enjoyment of God and Eternal Happineſs.

Religion puts us upon this one thing needfull, and its whole Scope and Deſign is to Cure and Mend, to Perfect and Improve the Soul, to Convert and Sanctifie, and Regenerate and Inlighten the Mind; which are words that import the making it wiſe and good, becauſe in this lies our true and proper Happineſs, in the Moral ſtate and Gracious temper, and Diſpoſition of the Mind, and in ſuch a Perfection and Enjoyment of it, as is attained by Religion. They who think Happineſs lies in bodily Pleaſures, or outward Enjoyments, do at the ſame time, leave Religion, and miſtake Happineſs. Religion bids us moderate all Carnal and Worldly Enjoyments, and mortifie all the Exceſſes and Immoderate deſires and degrees of them, and takes off as far as may be

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our natural Love and Affections to them; and will by no means allow us to place our Happineſs in them, as being poor and empty, ſhort and tranſient things, in reſpect of the more true, and greater, and inward Happineſs of our own Minds. Religion bids us mind that, and thoſe things in which it conſiſts, take care of our Souls and the means of improving them in Grace and Vertue, and the freeing them from thoſe Vices and ill Tempers, and Habits, that will Deſtroy, and make them Miſerable.

A Mans Happineſs or Miſery, even his Eternal one, is founded in his own Mind, and depends upon the good or bad Temper and Diſpoſition of it: for the Happineſs of the Soul is like the Health of the Body, ſomething within it ſelf, and conſiſts in the Vigour and right Operations of all its Faculties and its own inward Powers, and, as *Plutarch* obſerves, a Gouty Foot is not cured by a rich Shoe, nor the Head-ach took off by a Crown or Diadem, nor an ill Mind made Happy, by any thing without it; while it is ſick and uneaſie within, it will be Miſerable, tho' it hath every thing elſe; for Happineſs lies in our Minds, and within our ſelves; and Religion, by teaching us this, and being concerned wholly to better, and improve our Minds, and apply-

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ing it ſelf wholly to them, is very helpfull to bring us to it; for it thereby directs us where it lies, and takes us off from all falſe ſcents and purſuits of it, and from all vain opinions and imaginations about it. To know the true ſeat of Happineſs, and where it lies, in what it is placed, and wherein it conſiſts, is one of the beſt means to attain it, and neceſſary to prevent all miſtakes and wandring Queſts and unprofitable Searches after it, which almoſt all Men are guilty of, by Imagining it lies in other things, and in things without 'em, and not, as it truly does, in their own Minds, διὰ τὴν πηγμὴν τῆς εὐθυμίας ἐν αὐτοῖς οὖσαν ἡμῖν ἐκκαθαίρωμεν as *Plutarch* ſays; wherefore ſince the Fountain of this Reſt and Tranquility of Mind, is in our ſelves, let us take care to keep clean and purifie that.

2. Religion teaches us the trueſt and beſt Wiſdom, which is the Foundation of this Tranquility of Mind; for 'tis ſome Folly or other, ſome weak Thought or Paſſion, vain Fancy or Opinion, and the want of a true Underſtanding, and the rightly uſing our Reaſon, or making true Judgment of things, that is always the cauſe of the Diſorder and Diſturbance, and Indiſpoſition of Mind. Says *Tully*, The Fountain of all perturbations is a Defection from right Reaſon, ſomething

which does excite turbid motions, contrary and oppoſite to Reaſon; and therefore in his Excellent Diſcourſe on this Subject he calls Wiſdom, *Sanitas animi, inſipientia autem eſt quaſi inſanitas quædam, quæ eſt inſania, eademque dementia*: Wiſdom is the Health and Sanity of Mind, and Folly is its Unſoundneſs, and what puts it out of order. And he calls this good ſtate we are ſpeaking of, *ſanitatem animorum poſitam in tranquillitate quadam, conſtantiaque.* Now Religion teaches the Mind the trueſt Wiſdom, and cures it of the greateſt Follies that are incident to it; it directs it to have right Thoughts, and to make Judgment of things; propoſes to it the beſt end, and the ſureſt means to attain it; ſhows it what is its chief Happineſs, and its Principal Intereſt, and puts a right value and eſtimate upon things according to their worth and deſert, and thereby frees the Mind from all wrong Opinions and Imaginations, which are apt to make it Vitious as well as Diſorderly; for all Vice is founded upon falſe Reaſonings and want of right Judging of the Nature of things, whereby they imagine ſuch Actions to be good and agreeable, and that they ſhall be Happy in having ſuch Pleaſures and Enjoyments, and gratifying ſuch Luſts and Deſires, but they find themſelves Miſtaken and Deceived,

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and therefore vext and troubled, and repent of their own Folly one time or other, and so plainly confess and accuse themselves of having done a weak and silly thing, what their wiser thoughts cannot but condemn; and what appears now to be contrary to right Reason, would Men live up to that, which should be the design of a Wise Man, and what his Reason was given him for, and what makes him live above Brutes and Animals of meer Sense, and lower Passions: we should never be uneasie or disturbed or unquiet in our Minds, we should always approve of what we do, and be satisfied from our selves as the Wise Man speaks; we should live by Principles that would always support and bear us up, and let nothing sink or deject us; we should never do a Weak, a Rash or a Foolish thing, that we repented of and were sorry for afterwards; we should act steadily and constantly, by the certain Rules of Wisdom and Vertue, and not be so uncertain and mutable in our Thoughts and Actings, which causes great disquietude and unevenness, and disorder in our Minds. Were we but as wise as Religion would make us, we should have very little to disturb us; Religion is what teaches us the best Wisdom, and if rightly understood, preserves us from the greatest follies and

weakneſſes of humane nature; and true Wiſdom is the Foundation of Peace and Tranquility of Mind, which is always loſt, and deſtroyed by ſome folly or other contrary to right Reaſon and true Wiſdom.

3. Religion teaches us not to place our Happineſs in any outward things of this World, for if we do, we ſhall find Happineſs is not in our power, and that we cannot always reach or attain it; for things here will often fall out croſs and contrary to our deſires and wiſhes, and there are a thouſand Accidents to hinder and diſappoint us of our Worldly aims; and we muſt be often very uneaſie, and very miſerable, if our meer miſſing of them makes us ſo: and if we could attain them, and become maſters of them, we ſhould yet find our ſelves diſappointed, and ſhould not meet with that Happineſs that we expected from them. Had we all we could wiſh for or deſire in this World, yet we ſhould not find that ſatisfaction, and compleat Enjoyment we imagined before-hand in any condition; for thus Experience convinces us, and convinces all Mankind, that there is ſtill ſomething wanting to make us Happy, whatſoever we enjoy of this World; and how much ſoever we have of it, there is ſo much emptineſs in all the things of it, ſo much mixture and allay of evil with good;

good; it is ſo unagreeable to the larger capacities of our Souls, and ſo ſhort of filling and ſatisfying them, that *Solomon* pronounced of all Worldly things that they were *Vanity and Vexation of Spirit*, *Eccleſ.* 1. 14. and this is not a Philoſophical rant or a diſcontented Reflection, or an Hyperbolical ſaying; but a ſtrict and certain truth, founded upon the beſt Experience, and the wiſeſt Obſervation of things; for no Man whoever ſet his Heart upon the things of this World, found that contentment and full ſatisfaction in them that he expected, but met with more cares and troubles in the purſuing them, than they were worth, and pierced himſelf through with a great many ſorrows and anxieties, by being over deſirous of them: and if he gained them with all his labour and toil, yet was as far from true Happineſs as before; for as the Prophet elegantly expreſſes it, *The Bed is ſhorter than that a Man can ſtretch himſelf on it, and the covering narrower than that he can wrap himſelf in it*, *Iſa.* 28. 20. Worldly things are too narrow, ſhort, and imperfect, and are no way fitted to make us compleatly happy; ſomething will ſtill be wanting that we call good, and ſome evil will be preſent and mixed with what we enjoy, that will allay and embitter it. To ſeek for Happineſs in this World is to ſeek for the li-

ving among the dead; It is not here, it is risen, it is above; it is only in Heaven and in God, and Religion, and to be enjoyed no where else. Religion raises our Minds to a nobler and truer Happiness than any in this World, and it helps us to as good degrees of it, as we are capable of at present; by taking off our hopes and desires, and expectations of it, as to Worldly things, and curing us of too much concern and anxiety about them, and making us indifferent and easie, and contented whatever our present Circumstances are in this World. Which is the

4. Fourth thing by which it procures and affords this ease and tranquility of Mind that we are speaking of. Most of the uneasinesses of life, are caused by a sollicitude about Worldly things, proceeding from an immoderate love, and an over great Opinion of them, as if our Happiness lay in possessing a great abundance of them. This is the root of that Covetousness and Ambition, which make us inordinately desire Riches and Honours, which two are very restless and uneasy Vices, and fill our lives with infinite Trouble and Disquietude, and make our Minds always Uneasie and Discontented. He is a very Happy Man, who is easie and satisfied in his present Circumstances, and has *learnt*

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with St. *Paul, in whatsoever state he is therewith to be content*, *Phil.* 4. 11. who hath made such true Judgment of Worldly things, that he has no great Opinion of them, nor does admire or think there is very much in them: but having the Conveniences, and Accommodations of life, can eat of his own little morsel, and drink out of his own Brook, with as much Pleasure and Satisfaction as if he were to take from the greatest Heap, or drink of the greatest River, or be Entertained with all the Luxurious Plenty, and Ambitious State of the Rich and Great ones, who with all their Enjoyments have a Thousand times more trouble and uneasinesses than the other in a more moderate condition. For 'tis certain, the way to Contentment and Happiness, is rather to abate our desires, than to fill 'em; and the more we raise and heighten these, the more uneasie we shall always be. Vain Opinion and weak Imagination set a false value and estimate upon the outward differences amongst Men; but I doubt not but they may be all equally Happy, and that Providence has distributed good and evil with a more equal and impartial hand than we imagine, and that those of low condition enjoy as much Happiness in this World, as those of the highest: The difference is not made by Circumstances, but

by temper of Mind, and by keeping our desires within moderate bounds, and not being anxious, or sollicitous, or uneasie for what we do not enjoy; but in being contented and well pleased with whatever Providence allots to us: when we bring our selves to this, we shall be easie and happy and free our selves from those immoderate desires, carking cares and anxious sollicitudes about the things of this World, which pierce us through with a Thousand sorrows, and destroy the Ease and Tranquility of our Minds. Now to do this we must be taught and convinced by Religion, that Happiness lies not in outward things, and be cured of the contrary weak Fancy and Opinion that makes us so immoderately desire 'em, and be so anxiously concerned about 'em, to the loss even of that Rest and Peace of Mind, that we might otherwise have without them.

5. Religion teaches us to govern our Passions and lower Inclinations, and so to keep them from disturbing us, and breaking the Peace and Tranquility of our Minds. One of the greatest causes of uneasiness to us, and what is most contrary to this Rest and Tranquility we are seeking after, is the Disorder of our Passions, and the Disturbance and Disquiet they give us. Anger ruffles us, and puts

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us into a ſtorm, and deſtroys that ſmooth, calm, and ſedate Temper, that meekneſs puts us in: Envy preys upon it ſelf, and is inwardly corroded with its own ſharp and ſowre humours: Pride ſwells its ſelf with its own inward poyſon, and is blown up with an inward Vapour that Pains and Diſtends it, and makes it very uneaſie, even whilſt 'tis very conceited of its ſelf. Till theſe inward Diſeaſes and Indiſpoſitions and Commotions of Mind are cured in great meaſure, by the Preſcriptions and Directions of Religion, a Man can have no eaſe and quiet in his own Breaſt: for while he is under the power of any of theſe, or indeed of any lower, or bodily Inclination, ſuch as Luſt, Anger, brutal Rage, or brutal Concupiſcence; and has not maſtered thoſe natural Corruptions, nor brought thoſe Boiſterous and Head-ſtrong Paſſions under ſome Government and Subjection to the Laws of Wiſdom and Decency, Vertue and Religion; they will run him into a Thouſand Miſchiefs, Follies, and Inconveniencies, and he will never have true Peace and Tranquility in his own Mind. 'Tis the great buſineſs therefore of Religion, to mortify theſe bodily Paſſions and lower Inclinations, *to Crucify the Fleſh with the Affections and Luſts, to put away all Wrath, and Clamour, and Bitterneſs*, and to take

take off the Corruptions and Weaknesses of Humane Nature, by the rules of Religion, and the assistances of the Holy Spirit, and to Guard us where sin doth so easily beset us, by the Considerations of Heaven and Eternity, and another World, which are only Arguments strong enough to make men conquer and deny those passions and Inclinations which are in great part natural to them. Religion has a Power in it, if duly applied and attended to, to make the most passionate Man Calm and Gentle, the most Lustfull Man Chast, to Sweeten the most Sowre and ill-natured Temper, and Tame the most Outrageous and Violent. This Christianity did of old, as *Lactantius*, and other Fathers assure us, and boast of its Vertue and Efficacy; and this it no doubt will, and must do, in order to our Eternal Happiness if we come under the full Sense and perfect Government of it: for no Man can go to Heaven with those irregular and unmortified Passions about him, any more than come to Peace and Tranquility of Mind here; what is required and is necessary to the one, is necessary to the other also, and what promotes the one does at the same time promote the other; for the more approaches we make towards Heaven hereafter, the more we make at present, to this Peace and Tranquillity of Mind; and whatever tends to acquire the

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one, tends also to acquire the other: Religion by the same way leads to both, and the more we grow in one, the more we shall grow in the other; 'tis one of the greatest Perfections Religion is to bring us to, not to Destroy or Extirpate, but Govern and Master our natural Inclinations and bodily Passions, and make them always easie to our selves, and subject to Reason, Wisdom and Vertue; and when they are so, then we shall be in this most Pleasant and Happy State, which we call Rest and Tranquility, and Calmness of Mind.

6. Religion, and especially Christianity, removes all Guilt, and all Reason of inward Trouble of Mind, and Disquiet of Conscience; nothing is so contrary to this Peace, and Rest, and Tranquility of Soul as an inward Consciousness of a Mans own Guilt, and a dread of what he Deserves upon it; this will always disturb and make him uneasie in whatever outward Condition he be; it will be a Wound at his very Heart, and like a Dart struck thro' his Liver; he will feel it like a Prick upon a Nerve, a Pain in the Tenderest, and most Sensible part of his Mind, for such is a Sense of Guilt, and the Fears and Horrors that go along with it. Now what shall Cure this if a Man has faln into it, and what shall best pre-

preſerve him from it but Religion? Chriſtianity has provided a Remedy for the greateſt Guilt, which is the Blood of Chriſt, and thereby pours in Oyl and Balſam into the moſt wounded Conſcience; and by the Privilege of Repentance and New Obedience reſtores it to Peace and Comfort and a good State, and frees it from its Dreadfull Fears and Apprehenſions; it gives a Man firm Grounds of Hope and Comfort upon his return to his Duty, tho' he has not always obſerved it, and aſſures him that he ſhall be well treated by God upon it. This is a great thing which is owing to the Grace of God, in, and thorough Chriſt; and is the great Grace of the Goſpel, and what natural Religion could not Diſcover or Enſure to us: Chriſt alone giveth this Reſt to thoſe who are weary and heavy Laden, with the Burthen of their Sins; and Guilt is a Load and Burthen too heavy for us to bear; but what he has done takes it off from us upon our Repentance and Amendment, and becoming good Men, tho' after we have been otherwiſe.

Religion will beſt Guard and Preſerve us againſt all Sin, and keep us from doing any thing raſhly and inconſiderately, that ſhould afterwards trouble and vex us when we reflect upon it; and will therefore

fore prevent, as well as cure, the painfull Diſorders and Diſturbances of a Guilty Conſcience and Uneaſie Mind, and keep it always in the moſt Virtuous, and therefore moſt Comfortable ſtate: for nothing is ſuch a ground of Peace and inward Comfort, as to live always in a Habit of Virtue and Religion, in the practice of one, and by the principles of the other, and never to act contrary to them, or oppoſe them, in any thing we do; this will make a *good Man* always pleaſed and *ſatisfied from himſelf as* the Scripture ſpeaks, *Prov.* 14. 14. and give him the cloſeſt and the trueſt Happineſs, which is the Peace of his own Mind. What a Comfort a good Conſcience is, it is like Health or Pleaſure, better felt than deſcribed; 'tis a continual Feaſt in all Conditions, a perpetual ſpring of Joy and Comfort, riſing up in a Mans own Mind, and overflowing his Heart with unſpeakable Pleaſure and Delight: What will make a Man bear any Circumſtances? Endure any evil? Suffer any Affliction? Go through any Croſs or Reproach, and be tho' not without Senſe, yet without any great Trouble? When his Innocent Mind ſpeaks Cheerfully to him and Refreſhes him from within.

A Man can never have true Peace and Tranquility of Mind, without Virtue and Religion; for none but a good Man conscious to himself of his own Integrity and Sincerity, can have a good Conscience: and nothing is so contrary to this Ease and Rest, this Tranquility of Soul, as an evil Conscience, which *like the troubled Sea*, is always Stormy and Boisterous, and *casteth up Mire and Dirt*, as the Prophet speaks, *Isa.* 57. 20. the filth that is at the bottom of it, and is therefore the most directly opposite to the Calm and Serene State and Temper of Mind that we are seeking after. An evil Conscience is always full of Fears, and Horrors, of Dread and Disquietude; 'tis a Worm gnawing on a Mans Vitals, a Vultur preying on his Liver, a Snake stinging him to the Heart, a Fury Whipping him, a Devil tormenting him, a Hell kindled in his own Breast. Nothing can be too great and terrible to represent it by, and hardly any thing can come up to the misery of it, when it is in a high degree. Religion by delivering us from that, delivers us from the greatest trouble and uneasiness of Mind; and whoever is not stupid and senseless, will fall into that some time or other, unless he live Vertuously and Religiously.

7. Re-

7. Religion gives us Cheerfull Hopes as to another World, and ſo takes off the immoderate fear of Death, which muſt otherwiſe *all our life make us Subject to Bondage*, as the Apoſtle ſpeaks, *Heb.* 2. 15. and fill us with wretched and ſervile Fear whenever we think of dying; and we cannot but think of it ſometimes when we ſee the common Fate of Mortality in all others, and have ſome Warnings and Monitors of it, in our own Bodies: then what a melancholy thing muſt it be for a Man to think of going down into the place of darkneſs and forgetfulneſs, to become a cold heavy lump, a ſtiff dead Corps, to have all his brisk and vigorous Spirits put out and extinguiſh'd, and an end put to all his Pleaſures and Enjoyments, if he have not ſome Hopes of an after Immortality and of a better Life after this: No Man could enjoy himſelf or be eaſie in his thoughts, if he thinks at all, who knows he muſt die in a little time, if he has not the fears of Death took off and moderated by the Hopes and Expectations of Religion. He that conſiders, ſays *Plutarch*, the nature of his Soul, and that Death Tranſlates us into a better State, or at leaſt one that is not at all evil, has made an excellent proviſion, both for the Happineſs of life, and againſt

ὁ μικρὸν ἔχων τῆς πρὸς βίον εὐθυμίας ἐφόδιον ἢ πρὸς θάνατον ἀφοβίαν.

againſt the fear of death; and he makes this one of the great means of procuring this Tranquility of Mind, thus to overcome the fears of Death; for otherwiſe that will embitter all our preſent Enjoyments, and ſpoil all our Mirth and Jollity, and draw a dark Cloud over all our Cheerfullneſs and Gaity, to have the thoughts of Death ſteal in now and then upon us, as they unavoidably will, if we have nothing to make them leſs terrible and frightfull, than they will be to a wicked Man; he muſt be ſadly ſcared and amazed at any ſuch thing, and cannot think, much leſs look on Death, without ſad Miſgivings, and Horrors of Mind; and therefore can never have any ſetled Peace and Tranquility in himſelf, but it will be all broke by one thought of Mortality, by the hearing a Knell, or ſeeing a Coffin; for let him ſeem to put on never ſo much falſe Courage, and to laugh at theſe things in the midſt of his Company and his Vices, yet he trembles at them when he is alone, and a cold and clammy ſweat ſeizes upon him whenever he thinks of dying in earneſt: nothing can prevent this Deſpondency and dying of Mind, and arm even againſt the natural fear of bodily Death, which will often come upon us, and ſcatter all our other Comfortable thoughts; but Religion, which takes

out

out the ſting of Death, which leſſens and abates its terror, and fortifies us againſt it by the Chriſtian Hopes of being free from all Guilt and Puniſhment hereafter, and of having a better Life, and being in another World, when we are to part with this here.

Death muſt be very terrible to the thoughts either of an Atheiſt, by Depriving him of all Being, and of all Enjoyment; or of a wicked Chriſtian by conſigning him to Judgment and Puniſhment, and Tranſlating him to Eternal Death and Miſery: only Religion can take off its Terror, and ſweeten the bitter Cup with the Supports, and Comforts, the Aids and Aſſiſtances, the Hopes and Expectations it affords to a good Man in his laſt Agonies and Extremities, and at all other Times when he thinks of dying.

Laſtly, Religion infuſes inward and unſpeakable Comforts into our Minds from its preſent Privileges and future Hopes, from God and his Spirit, and their ſecret Communications, Operations, and Influences upon our Souls, which are the higheſt improvement and the higheſt degrees of Peace and Tranquility of Mind. Nature and Philoſophy knew nothing of this, but Revelation, and eſpecially the Chriſtian, give us the Knowledge and Aſſurance of it,

and many a Pious and good Christian has felt the Effects and Comforts of it in his Soul, when he has had a Cheerfull and well grounded Sense that his sins are pardoned in, and through Christ, upon his true Repentance; and that he is justified by the Grace of the Gospel upon the Terms and Conditions of it; and that he has a Title to Heaven by God's promise upon his own sincerity, and has reason to Hope that he shall partake of all the great and glorious things that belong to the Christian Salvation; these will raise and inspire him, as it did the Apostles and first Christians, with a more than ordinary Comfort, Peace, and Cheerfullness of Soul, and make him very Happy, tho' in the greatest Sufferings and outward Afflictions. 'Twas this which made the Christians Rejoyce always in the Lord, Rejoyce in Tribulations, Sing, and be Cheerfull in Prisons, and be more than Conquerors over all their Troubles, when they had these inward Comforts to support and raise, and invigorate their Minds: when, tho' their Enemies were implacable and irreconcileable, yet God they knew was reconciled to them, and tho' the World hated them, yet he loved them; tho' they had Tribulation from without, yet they had Peace in themselves, and Peace in Christ, as he promised them, *Mat.* 10. 32.

32. and tho' all things were very dark and diſmal about them, yet they had a clear proſpect of Heaven, and, like St. *Stephen*, could ſee that opened thro a ſhower of Stones, and Chriſt ſitting at the right hand of God. One ſuch view of Chriſt and Heaven, tho' but by the Eye of Faith would give a Man a Pleaſure and Courage of Mind above not only the Pains and Torments he endured, but all other Pleaſures he ever felt in his Life; A great, but ill Man could ſay, That the Pleaſures and Comforts of Religion, even when they are Miſtaken, and Enthuſiaſtick, are greater than all the Pleaſures of Senſe and Carnality. What are they then when they are true and well grounded? how do they not only give Peace to a Mans Mind, but even Rapture? not only Calm and Quiet it, but Tranſport it? not only give it Reſt and Tranquility, but Extaſie and Joy? This is called in Scripture the *Joy of the Holy Ghoſt*, *Rom.* 14. 17. *and the Peace of God, which paſſeth all Underſtanding*, *Philip.* 4. 7. for we do not know how God, who is a Spirit, can Communicate inward Joy and Peace to our Spirits, and convey a ſecret Senſe of his Favour, and Reliſh of his Kindneſs, and make us *taſte, and ſee how Gracious he is*, as the *Pſalmiſt* ſpeaks *Pſa.* 34. 8. and lift up the light of his Countenance upon us. There is more in all

this, not only in the extraordinary ſupports, promiſed in particular Caſes and Circumſtances, but in the ordinary Hopes and Comforts of Religion to a good Man, than all the Pleaſures of this World, all the Charms and Enjoyments of Fleſh and Blood can ever amount to; and as we plainly feel Peace and Eaſe of Mind to be a greater good than any bodily Pleaſure, and know this from Senſe and Experience, as well as Religion; ſo when this is heighten'd by thoſe unſpeakable Joys, and that inconceiveable Peace, which is derived from God and Religion, and his Holy Spirit; theſe give ſuch an improvement to this Peace and Tranquility of Mind, as nothing can equal, but the Enjoyment of Heaven; and which the wiſe Heathens and Philoſophers knew nothing of in their Diſcourſes on this Subject. Religion and Chriſtianity therefore out-doe theſe, and Diſcover new Springs to feed and maintain this, and to raiſe it higher; and tho' they run into the ſame Channel, namely, the Happineſs of the Mind, yet 'tis with a fuller Current and a ſtronger Stream: and they do more perfectly promote that Reſt and Peace and Tranquility of Mind, which tho' it be various in degrees, yet is the greateſt Happineſs, Perfection or Pleaſure it is capable of in general, either in this or the other World.

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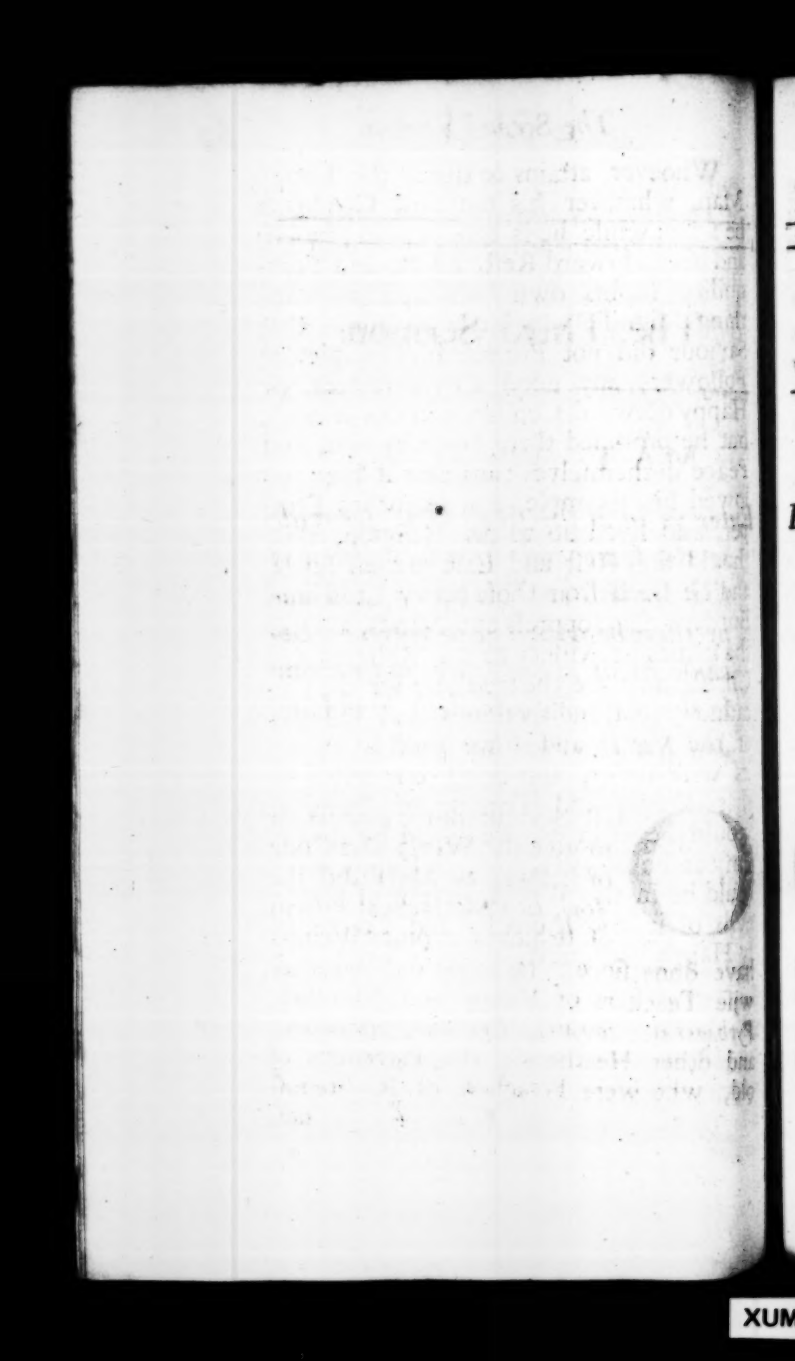
Whoever attains to this is the Happy Man, whatever his outward Condition be: for while he is eaſie within himſelf, and has an inward Reſt, Peace, and Tranquility in his own Soul, all outward things ſignifie very little to him. Our Saviour did not Promiſe his Diſciples or Followers any good Circumſtances, or Happy outward Condition in this World; but he promiſed them Peace in him, and Peace in themſelves: and that if they followed his Example, and learnt his Temper, and lived up to his Religion, they ſhould find Reſt and Eaſe to their Souls, and be freed from thoſe heavy Loads and Burdens that oppreſs our Minds, and are the cauſes of Miſery to us. Religion and Chriſtianity are the true cure for the Uneaſineſs, and Indiſpoſitions, and Diſeaſes of the Mind; and if we could live up to its wiſe Rules, and bring our ſelves to that Frame and Temper of Mind it would beget in us, we ſhould be always Eaſy and always Happy; as Happy as we could be in this World, in ſpite of all the evils of it, and Eternally and Compleatly Happy in the next.



The Third Sermon.

MAT. VII. 13, 14.

Enter ye in at the ſtrait Gate, for wide is the Gate and broad is the way that leadeth to Deſtruction, and many there be which go in thereat; Becauſe ſtrait is the Gate and narrow is the way which leadeth unto Life, and few there be that find it.

OUR Saviour did not think fit to give the World a ſet Code of Laws, as *Moſes* did the *Jews*, or a Methodical Syſtem of Ethicks, as other Writers have done ſince; no more did the other wiſe Teachers of Virtue and Morality, *Pythagoras*, *Socrates*, *Epictetus*, *Antoninus*, and other Heathens: the Patriarchs of old, who were Preachers of Righteouſ-

neſs, *Solomon* or the Prophets afterwards, but with greater ſimplicity and inartificial plainneſs, they dropt their excellent Precepts, and ſage Directions without any formal Method; and thus Chriſt taught us the beſt and moſt perfect Rules of Virtue, in his occaſional Diſcourſes, and Particularly in this his excellent Sermon upon the Mount, which is ſuch a Diſcourſe that it carries an internal Evidence, and a Heavenly Authority along with it, enough to ſatisfie any Wiſe and Good Man that the Doctrine is true, and that it comes from God, tho' it had no Miracles, nor other Evidence to prove it; for the Soul, if it be not vitiated, Taſtes and Reliſhes ſuch Congenial truths, that are agreeable and natural to it, as the Palate does its food, and Judges of their inward truth and goodneſs, by an internal Senſation and Perception and an immediate Congruity to its Faculties.

When our Saviour comes towards the Concluſion of this his Sermon upon the Mount, which was an Epitome of Chriſtianity, and the Sum of all thoſe Virtuous Precepts which were to make his Followers the beſt Men in the World, to make them exceed all the Righteouſneſs of the Scribes and Phariſees, and out-doe all the Examples, and all the Characters of Heathen Vertue; he tells 'em there would be

great

great Difficulty to riſe to theſe Attainments: that Religion and Vertue in ſuch a pitch as he had ſet them, and as was neceſſary to make a good Chriſtian, and to fit him for Heaven, were not ſuch ſlight and eaſie things; but that they muſt uſe great Care and Pains, and Labour, in the Attaining and Performing of them; that it was very eaſie to be vitious and wicked, and therefore moſt Men were ſo: but that to be Virtuous as a Chriſtian ought to be in all thoſe Inſtances and Degrees he had taught them, was a more Hard and Difficult matter, and that few would come up to it; but yet this was a thing abſolutely neceſſary to their Eternal Happineſs, and they muſt either take the Pains to do this, to come up to theſe ſtrict Terms, or elſe they muſt Periſh and be undone for ever by falling ſhort of them, *Enter ye in at the ſtrait Gate.* From which words I ſhall conſider,

I. What are the Difficulties of Religion and Vertue, or upon what account they are a ſtrait Gate and a narrow Way, and Vice a wide Gate and a broad Way.

II. Preſs the Duty and propoſe the Motives for our entering in at this ſtrait Gate and narrow way, notwithſtanding that it is ſo.

1. What

1. What are the Difficulties of Religion and Vertue, *&c.*

1. Then our Saviour's words might perhaps have ſome regard to the hard Circumſtances, Dangers, and Perſecutions that Chriſtianity was expoſed to at that time, in thoſe firſt ages of it, and is liable to afterwards; then indeed it was a ſtrait Gate, when they who enter'd into it, were bound to leave all they had in this World, all their Temporal Intereſts and Poſſeſſions, for Chriſt's ſake and the Goſpel's, and *all that would live Godly in Chriſt Jeſus muſt ſuffer Perſecution*, 2 *Tim.* 3. 12. then it was hard for a Rich Man who had great Poſſeſſions, and was loath to part with them, to follow Chriſt, tho he had a great Deſire and Inclination to do ſo, as in the Inſtance of the young Man, *Mat.* 19. 21. ſo that our Saviour ſaid thereupon, it was eaſier for a Camel to go thro' the Eye of a Needle, than for a Rich Man to enter into the Kingdom of Heaven, *i. e.* to become a Chriſtian at that time.

Then the way to Heaven was ſtrait and narrow, when it was beſet with ſo many Dangers, fill'd with Croſſes and Gibbets, and a Man muſt venture his Life as well as Eſtate, whenever he entered into it; but this was but a particular and accidental caſe, tho every

every good Chriſtian ought to come to ſuch a Perfection in Religion, as to be prepared and diſpoſed for this, whenever God ſhall think fit to put this hard Tryal and Difficulty upon him. But,

2. Chriſtianity is thus ſtrait and narrow upon other accounts. *viz.* The ſtanding Terms and Conditions of it, as it forbids every ſin and every wilfull wickedneſs upon the Pain of Damnation: This is very hard indeed to the generality of Men, and makes it a very ſtrait and narrow way, when it leaves no room for any one darling Luſt, undue Liberty or beloved Sin to go along with us: for according to the Goſpel, he that will not part with every willful ſin, however Pleaſant or Profitable it be to him, muſt part with Heaven for it; tho' the Temptation to it be never ſo Great, and the Charms of it never ſo powerfull, yet if Religion do not conquer and overcome it, we muſt for the ſhort Pleaſures of Sin, be Miſerable for ever; tho' it conduces never ſo much to our Intereſt or Advantage, ſo that we could gain the World by it, yet it will prove a dear Bargain at the laſt, and we muſt loſe our Souls for it: for by the irreverſible Terms, and unalterable Conditions of the Goſpel every willful and habitual ſin, deſtroys our good State, and without a timely Repentance and Amendment excludes

cludes us out of Heaven. And however we may think fit to abate of those Terms by our loose Opinions and false Principles, and make other Judgments of our selves, by the wrong measures of a Licentious Age, or as Mistaken and as Licentious Doctrines; yet Christianity has so plainly fixt these, that we have no reason to believe that God will, or can any way abate of them; and to be sure our Religion does not.

3. There are some particular duties in Christianity that seem very hard and difficult as well as the general Terms of it; such as loving Enemies, not revenging Injuries, self-denial, Mortification, and the like; which tho' they are against the grain of our Nature as some Men think, and as impracticable as the Rants of Stoical Vertue, yet are made necessary to our Pardon and Salvation by the Gospel, *Mat.* 5. 43. 6. 14, 15. *Mark* 8. 34. *Rom.* 8. 13. and they truly are so in their right Sense and Meaning, and ought to be as much performed by us, as any other parts of our Religion; we are bound as Christians to love our Enemies, with the general Acts of Charity, due to all mankind, not with the particular Offices of kindnesses due to our Friends; we must not revenge an injury to gratify a mere Private and Outrageous Passion, without regard to publick

lick good; we muſt deny our ſelves any Worldly Intereſt, when it is Inconſiſtent with our duty; we muſt mortifie every Natural Paſſion and Senſual Inclination, ſo as to keep it within the bounds of Virtue and Religion: theſe are all agreeable to Reaſon and Prudence, and to the Laws of Civil Government, as well as to the Principles of Religion.

4. Religion puts a check and reſtraint not only upon our Actions, but upon our Words and our very Thoughts, and this is hard, ſome think, that their Tongues ſhould not be their own, nor their Thoughts neither; but that of every idle Word they muſt give an account in the day of Judgment, and by our Words we ſhall be Condemned or Juſtified, as well as by our Actions, *Mat.* 12. 36, 37. and that our ſecret Thoughts ſhould be tyed up, ſo that we muſt not harbour any wickedneſs even in our Hearts and Thoughts *Mark* 7. 21. Now this, however ſevere it ſeems, yet if by idle Words be meant only evil Words, as I doubt not but 'tis, ſuch as thoſe of Slander and Deſamation of which our Saviour there particularly ſpoke; or ſuch Prophane and Lewd Diſcourſe, as tends to affront Heaven, or to Corrupt thoſe who hear it, and proceeds from a Malicious, Irreligious, and Corrupt Mind. This gives ſuch a vicious Tincture, even

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to our Words, that he who cannot better govern his Tongue, than thus to injure his Brother, or let fly at God and Religion, *This Man's Religion is vain*, as St. *James* says, *Jam.* 1. 26. if he pretend to any: and he who by his Mouth thus vents the Exulcerated Malice, Pride, and Uncharitableness of his Heart, and from such an Unchristian Temper calls his Brother Fool or Racha, is in danger of Gods Judgment and of Hell-fire, as our Saviour says, *Mat.* 5. 22. 'Tis the Venom and Malignity of the Heart, and inward Disposition, that, like a Corrupt Fountain, Poysons and Vitiates those ill streams that flow from it; and this is the true Plastick Principle within us, that Forms and Denominates all our Actions, which are but the Fruits growing upon that Root, and, as our Saviour says, *A good Tree bringeth forth good Fruit, and a Corrupt Tree, that which is evil*, v. 17, 18. of this Chapter. All Moral Good and Evil, is conceived and produced from the Heart; and God who sees it there even before it comes into Act, whenever it has the full consent of the Will, does very justly Condemn it, and charge it upon us. For, as without this consent of the Will, no Action is Criminal before him, so with it the Crime is both Specified, Committed, and Perfected, tho' it go

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no further than the Thoughts and the Heart.

3. Religion requires our lives to be uſefull, as well as Innocent, and enjoyns us not only to do no ill thing, but to do all the good that we are able; elſe 'tis but a negative and a uſeleſs Vertue, the eaſieſt and the ſofteſt ſide of it, like the old Principle of Privation, without the Matter and Form, that is to give it a Being and a Subſtance. We read in Scripture, not only of the wicked Servant, who was guilty of great Crimes, Miſdemeanors, and Injuries againſt his Lord; but of the Unprofitable one, who did no manner of good, but was idle, and uſeleſs in his Service, and for this Reaſon alone was caſt into outer darkneſs. God will call every one of us to a ſtrict and ſevere account how we have uſed and improved all the Talents he committed to us; all the Powers, Abilities and Opportunities of doing good, he hath put into our hands: and if like Loiterers in his Vineyard, we have only Feaſted our ſelves with the Fruits and Delicacies of it, and waſted our idle time in Eaſe and Luxury, and ſpent a vain and uſeleſs Life in trifling and impertinent either Pleaſure or Buſineſs; and not Laboured at all in the great Work and Buſineſs of Religion, for which we were ſent into the World: we muſt not at the laſt

laſt expect any wages from him, but be puniſhed for our uſeleſs idleneſs, and great omiſſions, by the Juſt Diſtributer of Rewards and Puniſhments, who will render to all Men according to their Works; and who expects we ſhould do all the good we can, for the ſake of Heaven, as well as abſtain from all manner of Evil, for the ſake of Hell.

6. Religion requires the Uniform practice of all Vertues, and the entire Union and Conjunction of all Chriſtian Graces to make and conſtitute a good Man; whereas any ſingle Vice or willfull Habit of Sin will denominate and make a bad one, ſo as to make him incapable of Happineſs and obnoxious to Miſery. This is an undoubted truth in Religion, which requires tho' not the Perfection of Degrees, yet the Perfection of parts; ſo that no plain Vertue muſt be wanting, nor no voluntary ſin be allowed without the certain danger of being excluded out of Heaven, as St. *James* ſays, he that *ſhall keep the whole Law* beſides, *and yet offend in one point*, willfully break any part of it, Commit one Act of willfull Treaſon and Diſobedience againſt Heaven, *is guilty of all*, reſiſts and oppoſes all that Divine Power and Authority, which gives Force and Sanction to every Law; and becomes liable to the ſame ſort of Puniſhment, tho' not to the ſame equal degrees of it. The Vertue of the Mind, and Divine

vine Life of the Soul, like the Life, Health, or Beauty of the Body must be made up of the regular κρασις, Disposition and Symmetry of all the parts; whereas one Fatal Wound, or Mortal Disease may kill us, as well as many; and one great and Notorious Deformity will Disfigure a whole Face. Vertue is like a straight line which must be every where even and regular, but a crooked and irregular one may be so in a hundred parts. Vice is infinite and knows no Bounds, but Wanders and Roves through all the vast unlimited extent of Evil, but Vertue confines us, and keeps us within the narrow compass of what is Good and Righteous, and made our Duty by a Divine Law. These are from Religion, its Terms, Conditions and Constitutions, there are two other Difficulties arising from our selves.

7. A great Reason why Religion and Vertue are so strait and narrow a way, is because our Natural Appetites and Inclinations, which are necessary to our present state, are so many, and so hard to be all governed and kept within the bounds of Vertue and Religion; these result from our Animal Nature, and are a true part of us, as Compounded of Flesh and Blood, and are so much Gods Workmanship and Creation, that we neither

can nor ought to deſtroy them; he allows us to gratify 'em within due bounds and did not put thoſe ſtrong Appetites in our Natures, meerly to vex and torture and diſatisfie us, but we muſt Govern them with great care, and not lay looſe the Reins upon their Necks, nor let them grow too Maſterleſs and unruly, at any time, for Reaſon and Religion; they are, I confeſs, the great Tryal and Inſtance of Human Vertue, and they may become a ſnare to us, and the great inlets into ſin without due care and watchfullneſs and managery; we muſt be therefore always upon our Guard, leſt this Fleſh and Senſe which we carry about us, and are ſo fond of, become a Traytor to us, and Sin do not ſome way or other ſurprize us, and enter at ſome of thoſe weak places of Humane Nature; we muſt ſtop and check the ſtrongeſt Inclination when it would lead us into Sin, and ſo far as it is Vitious, Immoderate, and Exceſſive, deſtroy it, tho' with never ſo much Pains and Violence; we muſt pluck out a right Eye and cut off a right hand, and deſtroy every Sinfull Inclination, be it never ſo Natural to us, and Crucifie the Fleſh with the Affections and Luſts, ſo that we may keep them always within the bounds of Wiſdom and Vertue, and ſuffer no *Sin to Reign in our Mortal Bodies, that we ſhould obey*

obey it in the Lusts thereof. Romans 6. 12.

8. Lastly the Difficulties of Religion, and Vertue arise mainly from the Prejudices and ill Customs and Habits of Vice which get possession of most Men before they well Understand Religion and the true good and necessity of it; our first years are a life of Sense, before we grow up to Reason and Understanding, and then other things, make the first Impression upon our Minds, and fill them with weak Images and Fancies, and Foolish thoughts; and thus when our Passions are strong and our Reason is weak, Vice generally gets the start of Religion, and without a very Happy and Virtuous Education, we contract a great many Ill Habits and Vitious Customs, that increase and grow up with us, and 'tis very hard to break and alter those, when we grow Wiser by Time and Experience, and come afterwards to have a better Sense of Religion and better Apprehensions about it; tho' we are then convinced of the Folly and Danger of our Sins, yet we are become such Slaves to 'em by long use, that it is hard to break their Chains, and get loose from them, and here lies the great Difficulty of Religion, and this makes it to be a strait Gate, and a narrow way, especially at the first entrance into it, when

old Cuſtoms and Habits muſt be changed and altered, former liberties retrench'd and denied, old Companions muſt be forſaken and former Temptations muſt be overcome, and Repentance, which is the hardeſt part of Religion, muſt be the firſt duty of it, and muſt cure the old Prejudices and the long habits of Sin, and in the Scripture phraſe bring in a New Nature, a New Soul, and make us New Creatures and New Men; this is a great Difficulty indeed, but it is brought upon our ſelves by our own fault, and we cannot blame Religion for it any more than we can the Phyſician, or the Phyſick that is to cure us of a Diſeaſe, that we have let run ſo long upon us, that 'tis hard now to perform the cure, and it cannot be done without going thro' a long and tedious courſe, and uſing a ſtrict Regimen, and very great abſtinence from what may be hurtfull to us. The great Argument to perſwade us to all this, is that we muſt die if we do not; if notwithſtanding all theſe Difficulties and hard Things in Religion, we will not comply with it, we muſt be Miſerable for ever, we muſt loſe all that life and happineſs, thoſe Glorious rewards it promiſes to us in another World, and we muſt ſuffer all the Dreadfull, Amazing puniſhments it there threatens.

There

There is no reſerve againſt this, but either by perverting Religion, or by denying it, either corrupting its Principles, and by falſe and miſtaken Notions giving our ſelves hopes of happineſs without living up to the Terms and Conditions of it, or elſe utterly denying it as a Cheat and a Falſhood, the latter is more impudent and daring, and what but few hardned wretches can come up to, the other is more common, and as Pernicious and Deſtructive. More Souls are loſt by falſe Principles, and the horrid corrupting of the Doctrines of Religion, than by downright Atheiſm and Infidelity, by truſting to a late and Deathbed Repentance, and thinking a little matter will do the buſineſs hereafter, as well as a very ſtrict and a very good life, by relying upon the Mercies of God and the Merits of Chriſt for Salvation without Obedience to the Goſpel, and performing ſuch things upon which alone thoſe are promiſed, by thinking to be ſaved, or juſtified by Faith alone, without Works or a good Life; and making Faith to lie in a preſumptuous Confidence of Gods Favour, or having an Intereſt in Chriſt, without regard to the plain Terms, and Conditions of Chriſtianity; or by the other ſuperſtitious Doctrines of having ſins pardoned by an Abſolution or an Indul-

gence, and the like; ſuch Doctrines as theſe, which turn the Grace of God into Wantonneſs, which make Religion an incouragement to Looſeneſs and Licentiouſneſs, and give Men hopes to eſcape Miſery, tho' they live in their Sins, and come not up to the ſtrict and ſevere Terms in Religion, but to go to Heaven by ſome other Imaginary and Unaccountable way, and to be ſaved upon ſome account or other, by Grace, or Chriſt, without entering this ſtrait Gate, and going in this narrow way; theſe deceive Millions of Souls, who tho they believe Religion, yet do not live up to it, but corrupt and pervert it, ſo as to take off its Force and Influence upon their Lives, and make them never the better by it.

The other reſerve, which is a moſt deſperate one, is that of Atheiſm and Infidelity, or an utter diſ-believing all Religion, or at leaſt a comfortable Doubt and Suſpicion, that it may not be true, and this I am afraid lies in too many Minds, but then all Mankind have been out of their Wits in believing it, for there have been very few, either in the moſt Wiſe or moſt Barbarous Parts and Ages of the World, but what have done ſo; unleſs then we have been all Cheated with Books of Revelation, and Hiſtories

of

of Miracles done by the Prophets of Old, and by Christ, and his Apostles afterwards, which are better attested than any Actions or any Books besides, that ever were in the World 1600 Years ago, so that we may as well call in Question all the *Greek* and the *Roman* story, as the *Jewish* and the *Christian*, and when we have run into such a Frenzy of Scepticism as to do that, and without having any positive proof against Religion, and the Being of God, and another World, for it is impossible to have that, and the greatest Atheist will not pretend to have any Evidence, Certainty, and Demonstration, but that they may be true notwithstanding all his doubts; after all this, the whole Frame of Nature and the Wise contrivance of the World, of the Heavens above, and the Earth, and Animals below, is a standing Evidence, as great as can be given of the truth of Religion in general, and a Man's Reason must be wretchedly blinded with his Vices, who doth not see it, or who winks so hard that he will not discern it; these wretched Reserves being therefore taken away, I shall proceed to press the duty of entering in at the strait Gate, and narrow way, and propose the motives to engage us to this, notwithstanding all the Difficulties I mentioned.

1. Religion is a buſineſs of ſuch importance, that whatever ſtraits and hardſhips there be in it, we muſt not ſtick at thoſe, but reſolve however to go through with it, for our Life, our Happineſs, our All, our Eternal ſtate lies at ſtake, and depends upon it; Our Saviour only tells us *ſtrait is the Gate, and narrow is the way which leadeth unto Life, and wide is the Gate, and broad is the way which leadeth to Deſtruction*: And this is ſufficient, if Life and Death be ſet before us; whatever be the way to them, we ſhould look at the great Ends, Iſſues, and Conſequences of things, which are the mark a Wiſe Man always aims at, and whatever means are in our Power, to attain the one and avoid the other, we ſhould make uſe of, without any long Counſel or Deliberation; for no Man demurrs and conſiders whether he ſhall chooſe happineſs and eſcape Miſery, Nature, and Inſtinct prevent our Reaſon here, and we are made with an inward ſpring which runs of it ſelf to the one, and flies from the other, whenever we truly apprehend them; and therefore did we conſider what that Life is, that Eternal Life of Happineſs which Vertue leads to, which is to live in the perfect Enjoyment of the greateſt good, and the pureſt Pleaſures free from all Alloys and all Approach of the

the leaſt Evil and Trouble, to live for ever with God and Angels in rapturous Bliſs, and Heavenly Delights, and Joy unſpeakable, to be Poſſeſt of a Crown, a Kingdom of ſubſtantial Glory, and all ſuch Good and Deſirable things, that this World affords but a faint Shadow, and imperfect Reſemblance of; we ſhould find this is a Life worth being fond of, and ſeeking after, compared to which, this our preſent ſhort life mixt with ſo much real Care and Trouble, and ſo little imaginary Pleaſure, is but a ſort of Death, but walking in a vain Shadow, and Dreaming of Happineſs, and hardly worth a Wiſe Man's chooſing, were it not for a better Life, which is only worth the name of Living, where we are born into another World, and Vertue ſhall give us a Glorious Immortality; this is a Reward that will ſufficiently Recompenſe our ſhort Labours here, and were Religion never ſo Difficult, yet the worth, and greatneſs of that, were our Hopes and Deſires of it proportionable to it, would inſpire us with new Vigour and Reſolution, and convey Strength and Power enough to carry us through them all; for what will not a great reward make Men do, whither will they not Travel, where will they not fight, what danger will they Flinch from, what Labour will they Refuſe,

fuſe, when a certain and great reward is offered to 'em? And had we but as good thoughts of Heaven, as the Soldier has of Honour and Victory, the Merchant of Gold and Gain, and the Husbandman of a good Harveſt, we ſhould never think much of all the Pains and Difficulties that are in Religion, were they a great many more than they are; as on the other ſide, if Men had but a due ſenſe of that Deſtruction, to which the wide Gate and the broad way of wickedneſs leads 'em, and the Sad and Dreadfull Condition their Vices will bring 'em to in another World, did they conſider what exquiſite and amazing Miſery, both of Soul and Body, is wrapt up in thoſe Words of Hell and Damnation, no Vice, tho' never ſo Charming, would make 'em endure it for one day, no Pleaſure of Sin for a Seaſon, would make 'em bear it for ſo long a time as this Life is, and nothing would ever tempt 'em, not only not to ſuffer it for ever, but to run the hazard and venture of it, were there not a thouſand times the reaſon to fear it that we have by Religion, and were it but meerly probable, or but juſt poſſible, which Atheiſm it ſelf can never deny, yet no Wiſe man would expoſe himſelf to ſuch a Dreadfull and Irretrievable danger for the Poor and Pitifull Temptations that are in the greateſt Sin. But

2. Be-

2. Beſides the Conſideration of another World, Religion with all its ſtraitneſs and hardſhip, does not abridge us of any Comfortable Enjoyments of this World, nor Deprive us of any of the true Pleaſures and good things here, which a Wiſe Man would Deſire, or which our Nature was made for; for they may be all enjoyed within the compaſs of Vertue and allowances of Religion, and that with more Convenience and Advantage than in a Courſe of Vice and Wickedneſs; Religion does not Deprive us of any good proper to our State and Nature, nor tye us up from any of the Comforts or Pleaſures of Life, with a peeviſh ſeverity and moroſeneſs, with a touch not, taſt not, handle not, but only reſtrains us from what would be Evil, and Pernicious to us, if it were allowed us; keeps us from the forbidden Fruit, and from thoſe exceſſes and extravagancies, that are Deſtructive to our ſelves and Miſchievous to the World; it does not deſtroy any of our Natural Pleaſures, but refines and purifies them, and draws them off from the filth, and Sediments which lies always at the bottom of thoſe that are ſinfull, and ſo it makes them clearer and ſweeter, and frees them from all that Nauſeouſneſs and Bitterneſs that Vice generally mixes with them; Virtue does neither Decay nor Diſeaſe our Bodies

Bodies, Trouble, or Torment our Minds, Conſume or Squander away our Eſtates, nor Ruin and Shipwrack our Fortunes, nor bring any ſuch Miſchiefs upon us in this World, as Mens Sins often do, but as keeping the bounds of it, will lead us to Eternal Life, ſo it will generally promote and improve the greateſt happineſs we are capable of in this.

3. Religion is as eaſie as God could poſſibly make it, and none of its Straitneſſes and Severities are Arbitrarily impoſed upon us, but from the Reaſon and Neceſſity of things, and the abſolute Fitneſs, Goodneſs and Wiſdom of whatever it Commands, and its real Tendency to our greateſt Perfection and Happineſs; for Religion is not an Arbitrary and Poſitive thing, made ſo by the mere Will and Pleaſure of God, which might have leſſened our Burthen and abated of our Duty in many Caſes had he pleaſed, and not impoſed ſuch hard Tasks, and ſuch ſtrait and ſevere Vertues upon us, but have left us more looſe and not tyed us up ſo ſtrictly as he has done; this is a great Miſtake, and a wretched Miſ-underſtanding of Religion, for that as to the moral part of it, is founded in the Nature and Perfections of God, which are Eternal and Unalterable, and in the as Eternal and Unalterable Reaſons of things,

things, and those Respects and Relations which they necessarily have to one another; so that as God cannot alter the Nature of a Circle or a Triangle, nor make two and two not to be four, so neither can he the Nature of Vice and Vertue, nor make Good to be Evil, or Evil Good. Moral Vertues are as much founded in the Nature of things, as Mathematical Truths, or Metaphysical Verities, and the Properties of them are as certain, and fixt as those of Lines or Numbers. Such Actions are as necessary to the good of the World, and the Happiness of Societies and particular Persons, as such Offices and Operations of the Body, are to maintain its Life and Health, so that breathing is not more necessary to the preservation of the one, than Justice, Fidelity, and other Vertues are to the other; and should God have let us loose from any of those Virtues, even the strictest of them, which the Libertines are most apt to complain against, such as those which restrain their Natural Passions of Lust and Anger, he would have let in a Thousand Mischiefs and Evils into the World, and have made us, as Brutish and Uncivilized, and as miserable as the very Beasts themselves, and as uncapable of Society, and the benefits of good Order and Government. But

4. As

4. As all the Laws of God are good and as eaſie as he could make them, ſo they are made more eaſie by that Divine Grace, and Aſſiſtance, whereby he enables us to perform them, and whereby the Difficulties of Religion are much lightned and abated; for every thing is ſaid to be light, or heavy in proportion to the ſtrength and power of another, and according as our ſtrength is encreaſed by the Divine Grace and Holy Spirit, ſo is Religion and Vertue, made more eaſie to us; ſo much then of inward ſtrength and power as is conveyed to our Minds by Gods Grace, which is a Phyſical and Secret Energy like that of inward life, *Strengthening us mightily, in the inward Man, regenerating, quickning, renewing, raiſing, enlivening us*, as the Scripture ſpeaks, ſo much lighter is the Burden of Religion that God lays upon us; for it is the ſame thing to take off ſo much from that or to add ſo much new ſtrength to him that is to bear it; and therefore however hard and difficult Religion be to the weakneſs and imperfection of Human Nature, to our ſingle power, which would of it ſelf fall and ſink under it, yet when we have the Aſſiſtance of Heaven, and the Aids and Supplies of Gods Grace to help and cooperate with us, then we can do all things through Chriſt which ſtrengthens

ens us, and thro' his Grace, which is ſufficient for us; and we cannot in reaſon complain for want of Power when we may have it, and God is ready to give us whatever power we want, even to Conquer the ſtrongeſt Propenſities, and moſt irreſiſtable Temptations; and this will take greatly off from the badneſs of the way which leads to Life, when we have the Spirit of God like a good Angel to lead us thro' it, always to Comfort, and Help, and Incourage us in it, ſo that it would be much more tolerable tho' it were thro' never ſo Dark and Unpleaſant a Wilderneſs, when, like the *Jews*, we have the preſence of God and his power to Conduct us all along to the Happy Land.

5. Tho' we are apt to complain of the Difficulties in Religion, yet there is no great End whatever which we can attain without as much Pains and Labour, and going thro' as many Difficulties and Hardſhips as we do in Religion; No Man can arrive to Learning or to any Liberal Art or Science in any Perfection; no Man can riſe to Honour and Preferment, can get an Eſtate, or the like, without uſing as much Diligence, as much Care and Watchfullneſs, as in the buſineſs of Religion, without denying himſelf as many Liberties, ſpending as much

Time

Time and keeping himſelf to as ſtrict Rules and Meaſures, as are in Religion: Nay, I dare ſay, many a Man takes more Pains and meets with more Difficulties to get a ſorry livelihood in this World, than would ordinarily carry a Man to Heaven, and make him live Happily for ever; what ſhall we then charge God ſo Fooliſhly, as if he had uſed us hardly in Religion, and make the way to Happineſs ſtrait and narrow and difficult, when we as ordinarily and more willingly, take as much Pains and go through as many Difficulties in all other things; 'tis becauſe we have not ſuch a value and Eſteem of the Ends and Deſigns of Religion, as we have of other Worldly ones, that we complain of the Hardneſs and Difficulty of that above the other; did we think Heaven as Deſirable as an Eſtate, and Vertue as great a Good as Honour, which is but the ſhadow of it, we ſhould purſue it as vigorouſly and overlook and contemn all the Difficulties that lie in the way to it, and there is this advantage in ſeeking and purſuing the Ends and Deſigns of Religion above any of thoſe in this World, not only as they are far greater, and infinitely more valuable and important, but that the one is certainly to be attained, if we uſe our utmoſt Care and Diligence, whereas we may fail and be Diſappoint-

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ed of the other, after using all means in order to it; we may not be able to gain an Estate, or compass such a Worldly Design let us do what we can in it, but no Man shall miss of Heaven, but thro' his own Fault, and by his own Negligence and Carelessness.

6. Many Sinners take more pains and trouble, and run thro' more difficulties to compass their vitious Designs, and commit their Sins, than a good Man does in gaining Heaven, and practicing the hardest Vertues and Duties of his Religion: For thus, how restless and unwearied, and indefatigable are the Covetous and Ambitious, the Revengeful and Malitious, or the Lustful and Debaucht, to attain their Ends, and gratifie their extravagant Desires and Inclinations: How do their several Lusts put them upon the hardest Drudgery, and make them Toil and Labour, Watch and Attend, Project and Contrive, and be at more pains and trouble to undo themselves for ever, than would save their Souls, and make 'em Happy for ever. The Devil is much the harder Master of the two, and puts his Slaves to more vile and uneasie work in the Servitude of Sin, than God does his Children and Servants in the doing the hardest part of their Duty, and many have been greater Martyrs in the Devil's Service, and

gone through more for the sake of their Lusts than other Martyrs have done for their Religion, and for the sake of Heaven.

Tho' Vice seems more Natural, as falling in with some Propensities and Inclinations that are within us, yet how must a man at first, offer great Violence to himself, and to the tender sense of his own Mind, before he can be brought to commit a great Sin? With what Reluctancy and Self-denial, as great as any that Vertue puts upon us, does he part with his first Innocence, and enter upon a Debauch, till by degrees he grows a less Modest, and more Couragious Sinner, and is led on at last to commit it with greediness, and it becomes Natural to him, and 'twould be no great difficulty for him to leave it, but 'tis only the Custom and Habit makes it so, and not any thing in Nature, or in the thing it self? For let the Customs be equal on both sides, and let a Man be as long used to Vertue as he was to Vice, and he shall find that as Natural and agreeable and as hard to be overcome as the other, so that as the Scripture represents it, it is as hard for him that has been accustomed to do evil, to learn to do good, as for the *Æthiopian* to change his Skin, or the Leopard his Spots, *Jer.* 13. 23. *So whosoever is born of God,*

God, i. e. a very good Man, *doth not commit sin, and he cannot sin because he is born of God*, 1 *John* 3. 9. But

Lastly, and to conclude, it ought to be no manner of Prejudice to Vertue, that there are but a few that enter the strait Gate, and find the way to Life, and many that go in at the wide Gate and the broad way, that leadeth to Destruction, as our Saviour says. This ought not to be regarded by us as a Discouragement to Vertue, or as any good reason to be wicked for Company, tho I doubt it is a very common and prevailing one, and draws a great many into the broad way, because they see such great Numbers in it, and they do not care to be singular nor to be Reproached for being so, but are willing to do what they see so many others do, and hope to escape as well as the rest, and that they run but the same risque and hazard, that they see so many Thousands do besides, and so they resolve to venture as well as others, let the Preachers say what they please; Now this, however common and powerfull it be, yet is the most unreasonable thing in the World; for is any man in another case willing to be sick or to die for Company, or for the sake of example? Would any be so Easie or so Complaisant, as to pledge another in a Cup of Poyson, or would

he not ſtop the mad frolick when he ſaw the reſt of the Company drop down Dead before him? Is any Man unwilling to avoid the Plague if he can, becauſe there is a general Infection, and becauſe ſo many of his Neighbours or Acquaintance have died of it? Would any refuſe the ſaving his life, and eſcaping, if he could, upon a Plank, becauſe the reſt of his Company are Sinking and Drowning? Did Men think it as much worth their while to ſave their Souls as their Lives, how many ſoever loſt them, had they as Juſt and terrible Apprehenſions of their own Damnation, as they have of their Dying the Temptation of Example and Company would be quickly taken off, and ſignifie nothing? For alas, what Comfort will it be in the Flames of Hell to hear ſo many others Roaring and Howling in them, their hideous Cries and Tortures and Lamentations will rather encreaſe, than leſſen them, and make it only a more ſad and diſmal Scene of Terror, like that of a whole City or Country ſwallowed up by an Earthquake or overflowed with the Eruptions of a burning Mountain, and the liquid ſtreams of Fire and Brimſtone: No Man who knows what it is to be Happy but would wiſh to be ſo tho he were alone, and no Man who knows that vertue alone is the

way

way to life and happineſs, but muſt chuſe to be Vertuous, tho' he ſaw never ſo many others wicked, let them Reproach and Laugh at him as long as they pleaſe for a Man ſingular and by himſelf, let them count his Life Folly, for being ſo ſtrict and preciſe (if it be in the great matters of Vertue) for not drinking to the utmoſt pitch, nor daring to ſwear the leaſt Oath, nor venturing upon a Debauch, or any Common, or any Modiſh, or Faſhionable Vice (the Reproach and Scandal of which is took off by the great Party and Number it has of its ſide) but living up ſtrictly to the Rules of the Goſpel, and the Terms of Salvation there laid down without any ſuch abatements, as the looſe Opinions, or looſe Practices of others, are willing to put upon them (ſince God will not alter his Methods or Judgments by any of thoſe) let them I ſay Condemn or Deride him never ſo much for this, and call him Preciſe Fool, or Formal Saint, and the like, yet no Man that knows the good of Vertue, will be Laughed out of it by a Nick-name, or be aſham'd of being ſingular in that any more than in any other Excellency of Learning, Knowledge, or Wiſdom above others; and I ſuppoſe none of thoſe who are ſo much againſt ſingularity but would be willing to be Rich, or to be Well, and at Eaſe,

though never so many others were Poor, or Sick, and in Pain, and why then not to be Vertuous and Happy, tho' never so many others are Vitious and Miserable.

The

The Fourth Sermon.

MATTH. VI. 19, 20.

Lay not up for your ſelves Treaſures upon Earth where Moth and Ruſt doth corrupt, and where Thieves break through and ſteal? But lay up for your ſelves Treaſures in Heaven, where neither Moth nor Ruſt doth corrupt, and where Thieves do not break through and ſteal.

THis moſt Excellent Sermon of our Bleſſed Saviour, as in every thing it gives us the higheſt and the nobleſt precepts of Vertue, that are above all the Morals of the wiſeſt Heathen, and far excell the beſt rules of the

greateſt Maſters in Philoſophy, which might have convinced *Greece* and *Athens* it ſelf, that he muſt be, if not, the Son of God, yet ſome great and extraordinary Perſon ſent from above, that without Travel abroad or Education at home, unleſs in a poor Trade, ſhould outdo even *Socrates*, or the more admired Moraliſts amongſt 'em, ſo he has all along adapted 'em to Humane Nature, and our preſent State and Circumſtances in this World, which was a thing that they were deficient in; for as they often were too ſhort in their precepts and much below the things, ſo at other times they were as much too high and gave precepts that were too big, and not at all fitted to the ſize and ſcantling of our preſent State or the make of Humane Nature; they were not only for wiſely Moderating and Governing, but quite rooting all Paſſions and Affections whatever out of their wiſe man, which was to make him not a Man, or ſuch a Creature, with ſuch Faculties and Powers, as God thought for wiſe reaſons fit to do, this was not to improve but deſtroy Human Nature and to ſet Vertue beyond its pitch and out of its reach, which our Saviour who knew our Frame and our outmoſt Capacities has never done; they went ſo far in their rants about the contempt of this World

and

and deſpiſing riches as to commend him that fooliſhly threw them into the Sea, that they might be no hindrance to his deeper Philoſophizing. Now this as it betrayed a great weakneſs in him that could not otherwiſe better uſe 'em, ſo 'tis Calculating Virtue, not for this World, but for ſome other *Eutopian Meridian*, the making it not Uſeful and Comfortable, but Deſtructive of our preſent State and Condition in this World; and tho our Bleſſed Saviour both by his Life, and his precepts, ſhowed as great contempt of the things of this World, as ever any perſon did, and has given the beſt Arguments that can be, not to be ſolliciteus for outward things, nor take any thought for the Morrow, in the latter part of this Chapter, by truſting in the Divine Providence, and being eſpecially carefull about better things, the Kingdom of God and his Righteouſneſs, yet he has no where told us that theſe are inconſiſtent, and that a Man muſt throw away his Eſtate, and renounce all his worldly goods, as well as the Pomps and Vanities of this World, if he will become a Chriſtian and go to Heaven; this indeed is ſaid to be the Hereſie of *Pelagius*, in which he was not likely to have very many Followers; and tho ſeveral places of Scripture tell us *how hardly*

they

they that have Riches ſhall enter into the Kingdom of Heaven, Mark 10. 23. and that *it is eaſier for a Camel to go through the Eye of a Needle, than for a Rich Man to enter into the Kingdom of Heaven*, v. 25. which is all meant of *them that truſt in Riches*, v. 24. that we cannot ſerve God and Mammon, bids us *not love the World nor the things that are in the World, for if any Man love the World, the love of the Father is not in him*, 1 John 2. 15. yet they all import no more, and ſo will be fairly underſtood, by this excellent direction of our Saviour that I am now to diſcourſe of, *Lay not up for your ſelves Treaſures.*

Neither is that purely a Negative, an Univerſal forbidding us to lay up any Treaſures upon Earth, for if we do not that in ſome meaſure, we are not guilty only of great Imprudence, but even of Infidelity too, *If any provide not for his own, and eſpecially for thoſe of his own Houſe, he hath denied the Faith, and is worſe than an Infidel*, 1 *Tim.* 5. 8. not to make proviſion for ones own Off-ſpring and Children is to be more Unnatural than the Heathens, nay, than the very Fowls, and the moſt Ravenous Beaſts, and not to ſupply an Aged Helpleſs Parent, is to be guilty of that which the Heathens counted the moſt infamous Ingratitude; nay, if by

by an honeſt Induſtry and lawful Profeſſion we do not ſome way or other, make our ſelves ſerviceable to the publick and able to procure ſome good, to the whole of which we are parts, we are like dead and uſeleſs Members, that ſerve neither for Life nor Motion, nor the conveyance of Blood and Spirits; and as in the Natural body, ſo alſo in the civil, 'tis impoſſible to maintain either its Life or Strength, unleſs ſome greater parts are Repleniſhed with a larger abundance of Blood and Spirits, and there be a general Circulation and leſſer conveyance of 'em to every part. Neither Government nor the World could ſubſiſt ſo long as God intends it, if Men ſhould lay aſide all prudent care about the things of this World; all would be put into a dead Hand, and that would quickly make a dead Body, if it were not Lawfull for ſome Men to Trade and grow Rich; the preſent ſtate of this World makes this to be neceſſary and is utterly inconſiſtent with general Vows of Poverty, and as a Man may Lawfully work for his livelihood, (and according to the Apoſtles Rule, *He that will not work neither ſhould he eat*, 2. Theſ. 3. 10.) without breaking our Saviour's command, *John* 6. 27. *Labour not for the Meat that periſheth, but for the Meat which endureth unto everlaſting Life*, ſo he may

may by prudent and honeſt ways take care of his Worldly Concerns, and add to his Eſtate, and grow Rich without any Violation of our Saviour's Rule, *Lay not up for your ſelves Treaſures on Earth*, for thoſe Treaſures on Earth are not of themſelves Evil, and may be matter of very great Vertues, ſuch as the rich Men are particularly charged with 1 *Tim.* 6. 17, 18, 19. *Charge them that are rich in this World that they do good, that they be Rich in good Works, ready to Diſtribute, willing to Communicate, laying up in ſtore for themſelves a good Foundation againſt the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life*, which it ſeems they may be made the means of attaining; ſo that by theſe Negatives, is meant only a comparative command, that we rather lay up to our ſelves Treaſures in Heaven than in Earth, that we be more carefull for the one than the other, not that one is forbidden by the other, but to be preferred before it, as we have the like manner of expreſſion moſt frequently in Scripture, *Prov.* 8. 10. *Receive my Inſtruction and not Silver, and Knowledge rather than Gold*, ſo *Mat.* 9. 13. *I will have Mercy and not Sacrifice*, i. e. rather than Sacrifice God did ſo much value inward and real Righteouſneſs before outward Rites and Performances, that he ſays to the *Jews*, *Hoſea* 6. 6. *I deſired Mer-*

and not Sacrifice, nay, more expreſly, *Jerem.* 7. 22. *I ſpake not unto your Fathers, nor commanded them in the day that I brought them out of the Land of* Egypt, *concerning burnt-Offerings or Sacrifices, but this thing commanded I them, ſaying, Obey my voice, i. e.* this was what in the firſt and chief place I commanded you, and very much preferred and Regarded before the other, ſo *Joel* 2. 13. *Rent your Hearts and not your Garments, i. e.* have an inward Sorrow and Humiliation, rather than an outward; and a great many other Phraſes, that ſeem expreſly to forbid a thing, in reſpect to ſomething elſe that may ſtand in Competition with it, when yet they do not ſo abſolutely, but only diminiſh and leſſen it, in reſpect of the other and prefer that before it, and ſo this precept as it lies in my Text, whole and entire, without breaking it into parts, is plainly to be underſtood and includes in it theſe ſeveral things.

1. That we ſhould much more Value and Eſteem Heavenly Treaſures in our Thoughts and Affections, than Earthly.

2. That whenever there is a Competition between thoſe, and we cannot ſecure both, we part with the Earthly rather than the Heavenly.

3. That

3. That we use as much Care and Diligence to obtain the Heavenly as the Earthly.

4. That we so seek the Earthly as to make 'em Means and Instruments towards the obtaining the Heavenly.

1. That we should set a greater value upon Heavenly Treasures in our Thoughts and Affections than upon Earthly, that we should account them much more excellent and desirable things and place our Happiness and chief good in those, but not in the other; We may allow these outward things such a due place in our Thoughts as they deserve, that they are Comfortable Conveniencies, and Necessary Accommodations to our present state, but not such things as are good in themselves, or that can afford us any true Happiness, but what we see Men as Miserable in their fullest Enjoyment of, as those who have the greatest want of 'em, by no means comparable to Wisdom or to Goodness and Vertue, or the least improvements of the Understanding and Mind; such as is in some measure proportionable to the wants of Nature and the Circumstances of this Life; a wise Man may count desirable, who is not bound with a Stoical fullenness to think it indifferent whether he be Clothed or Naked whether he Starve or have Food to eat,

nor

not in a Cynical Bravado throw away his Earthen Diſh becauſe he can drink without it, and deſpiſe every thing but his Tub and Sun-ſhine; no this is a ſelf-denying kind of Haughtineſs, that deſpiſes every thing becauſe it over-values it ſelf, and contemns not only the World, but the maker of it too, who would never have placed us in ſuch a well Furniſhed Habitation, if we might not have uſed the Conveniencies that belong to it, nor have been at all the better for all the rich ſtores he has laid in for the uſe of his Creatures; but then indeed we are to account them but as common Utenſills, that are convenient for our lower and ſmaller occaſions, not as our Treaſure, and what we account of any great Worth or Value, or make to be a prime ingredient into our true Happineſs; tho' they may ſeem to give ſome outward Colour and Varniſh, yet that muſt be ſomething within, and if it be not found underneath, 'twill quickly moulder away and conſume for all they can do, that are no more to be thought parts of our Happineſs, than our Hair or Nails are parts of a Man, ſuch Excrementitious parts as may outwardly adorn, but be no manner of cauſe of the true Life, or ſtrength of the Body, ſuch Goods as we may value and deſire and purchaſe too

too according to that low and moderate rate, which they bear in proportion to the real needs of this preſent Condition; but to over-prize and eſteem them as things equal to Vertue and Goodneſs or to place our *ſummum bonum*, or chief Happineſs in 'em, and let 'em take up the chiefeſt place in our Hearts and Affections, this is to worſhip Mammon, to ſet up that for an object of my ſtrongeſt Paſſion and Devotion, which ought to have the loweſt place in 'em.

Thus to *ſet our Hearts upon Riches, if they do encreaſe*, which the *Pſalmiſt* forbids, *Pſ.* 62. 10. to truſt in 'em, as our Saviour ſpeaks, *Mark* 10. 24. and place our greateſt confidence in thoſe, as if we might ſurely expect Happineſs from 'em; this is the Idolatry the Apoſtle Charges Covetouſneſs with, *Col.* 3. 5. ſetting up a Golden Calf, to help us in our Diſtreſs inſtead of the God of *Iſrael*, and making a Deity of that which would do very well in ear-rings and Bracelets; the making that which would be ſerviceable in the matters of this Life, to be ſo highly valued and even adored by us, is like the Folly of the *Græcians*, who bowed down and Worſhipped that wooden Statue of *Hercules*, which *Diagoras* made a good Fire of, that helpt to dreſs his Proviſion, that being a much better uſe of

Wood

Wood, than to be made a God of. And he that has a due ſenſe of the meanneſs, the Uncertainty and Tranſitorineſs of theſe Earthly Treaſures in reſpect of the Heavenly, their being ſubject to be corrupted by Ruſt, to be eaten by Moths, ſecretly Waſted and Devoured, or violently ſeiz'd upon by Thieves, and ſubject to a thouſand Caſualties, will not be ſo apt to over-value them or prefer 'em to the other; if we compare and bring 'em together, we ſhall find a very great difference between 'em upon many accounts.

1. Theſe Earthly Treaſures are ſubject to a great many Hazards and Uncertainties, which the others are not, Violence and Rapine may force 'em out of our hands, tho' we hold 'em never ſo faſt, fraud may ſecretly beguile us of 'em, before we are aware, or a Pyrate may Rob and a Storm ſink all our Fortunes in an Inſtant, and if they come ſafe home, yet they may be loſt there, a War may Plunder us of all we have, or a Fire may make a ſpeedier Deſtruction, and Devour in a moment the fulleſt Barns, or the richeſt Ware-houſes, and we may ſit like *Job* mourning upon their Aſhes, the only thing it has left us; ſo many various Caſualties are they ſubject to, ſo little are we inſured of them, that we

hold 'em at the Mercy and Favour of a thouſand Contingencies; but the Heavenly Treaſures are quite out of harms way, and not ſubject to the Chance or Courteſie of Fortune; no Man can ſteal away our Virtue without our own conſent; it's ſafe in our own Breaſt, and lock'd up ſecurely in our Minds; the Oppreſſor that can ſtrip us Naked of every thing elſe, cannot touch our Innocence, nor take that from us. The *Sabæans* could rob *Job* of his Oxen and his Aſſes; a Fire could conſume his Cattle, and the fall of a Houſe bury all his Children in the ſame Grave, but nothing could remove his Patience and take away his Integrity, that ſtill he retained and held faſt, *Job* 2. 3, 9. The Philoſopher that loſt all in a wreck, yet kept his Philoſophy and Wiſdom in ſpite of Fortune, and the Apoſtles, who left all they had, ſtill preſerved their Religion and a good Conſcience, which by the decree of the Senate could not be Sequeſter'd, nor Confiſcate by the Emperor's Edicts; thoſe inward Treaſures of the Mind are ſafe, when things without are never ſo uncertain, and when they ſhall bring us to another World, then they ſecure beyond poſſibility of the leaſt danger; whatever Storms and Shelves and Rocks we paſs thro' here, when we once Land and ſet Foot upon the ſhore of Eternity,

ternity, we are out of all danger and in a ſafe harbour, where we ſhall enjoy the rewards of all our Toil, and be vaſtly enriched with Treaſures of that Happy and Secure place.

2. Theſe Earthly Treaſures are fading and Tranſitory, but the Heavenly are durable and laſting; *Riches certainly make themſelves Wings and fly away as an Eagle towards Heaven*, *Prov.* 23. 5. of a ſudden we know not how they are got out of ſight, and we can never ſet Eyes on 'em again; they leave their poſſeſſor ſometimes without much warning; like Tides, they rowl from one Shore to another, from this Man or Family to the other, and leave him perhaps a Beggar to day, who was in the greateſt Plenty but a little before, or if they be not ſo Fickle nor leave the owner on a ſudden, yet in a little time he muſt leave them, Death will ſtrip him naked as he came into the World, *and then all his thoughts periſh*, *Pſ.* 146. 4. All his thoughts of being rich or great, or happy in this World, all the mighty Projects and deep Contrivances about worldly things are quite at an end, and a ſudden ſtop is given to the building of bigger Barns or finer Houſes, or making greater purchaſes and laying up more of theſe Earthly Treaſures. The Soul is perhaps taken from him the night

before he was resolved to do all this, and then how insignificant are they all, and what is he the better for 'em. Thus Foolish it is to carry on only such short designs, that we must break off very suddenly and abruptly, and not lay our Thoughts deeper than the Grave, or beyond this transitory Life, not to have our thoughts and aims upon greater things that must for ever imploy our Minds, that are more lasting and durable, of a more fixt and solid Nature, and that will last as long as our immortal Souls, that we may sit down with, and bid our Souls be for ever at rest, for they have goods laid up, not only for many years, but for ever.

3. These Earthly Treasures are such empty things, that they can never give us such inward Happiness, as the Heavenly will: We are apt indeed to admire at the brave outside, the appearing gaity and finery of the Rich and Great, but all this without Vertue, is but show and pageantry; they have none of that real Happiness, nor enjoy any thing of that satisfaction we imagine they do; they have a thousand Troubles and Multitudes of cares, caused even by their Riches and Greatness, that lie heavy upon 'em; vast loads of unseen miseries oppress 'em, and inward and secret guilt fills 'em with horror;

horror; and vaſt legions of evil Spirits haunt and diſturb thoſe Houſes within, that look ſo ſtately and beautifully without. We make very falſe meaſures, and are mightily miſtaken if we conclude him to be Happy, that we ſee has the viſits and the Complements, and the greateſt Court made to him, alas, we ſee not into his Mind nor how uneaſie he is there, and how little the better for our fooliſh Opinion of him; 'tis only his own thoughts and his own vertue and good temper of Mind that make him a Happy Man for all this, and without this he may Cheat others, but he can never deceive himſelf; theſe are inward and cloſe to his Mind, and indiſcernible to any one but himſelf, the other are all external and looſe, like Scenes and Pictures looking fine at a diſtance, but if we come near 'em, 'tis all groſs daubing, they cannot yield us that Enjoyment and Happineſs that we vainly fancy and expect in 'em; and whilſt we imagine we embrace what we can wiſh, it proves but a thin Cloud and Air, and very often what the wiſe Man found it, who had made as many Experiments about worldly Happineſs as any Man did, *Vanity and Vexation of Spirit*, and therefore not worth ſo much paſſion and concern to attain 'em, nor fit that we ſhould *lay out our Money for that which is not*

Bread, and our labour for that which ſatisfieth not, Iſai. 55. 2. for windy and empty traſh, rather than for that ſolid food, which will nouriſh and feed and feaſt 'em to all Eternity.

2. Whenever there is a Competition between thoſe, and we cannot ſecure both, that we part with the Earthly rather than the Heavenly; when we do an ill thing in order to our worldly intereſt, when a Bargain will not go off unleſs it be voucht with a downright lye, nor an Eſtate be got without open Knavery, or ſome underhand ſlight and ſecret injuſtice, nor a great Place or Preferment be obtained unleſs we venture upon ſome thing that is mean, and ſhamefull, and diſhoneſt, then to ſcorn to do a baſe thing for any advantage, and to prefer Honeſty and Conſcience, before Gain or Greatneſs, this is to value the Heavenly more than the Earthly Treaſures; this ſhows we love Vertue, for it ſelf, when we chooſe that alone, not for its preſent dowry or portion, but for its own ſake, and what we may expect hereafter, and will not forſake it for all the offers that the World can make: This indeed, is the true gage of our Affections, the true way to meaſure our love to theſe worldly things, and know whether it be too great and immoderate or no; if we will be guilty of

of the leaſt Sin or Injuſtice, in order to the getting Money or growing Rich, if we will wrong the Orphan or cheat the Widow, whoſe Eſtate is entruſted to us, if we will break our promiſe and deny our word, when it would be ſome loſs to us to perform it, and avoid a Juſt debt upon ſome little trick or legal nicety, or do any thing for our Intereſt that comports not with fair dealing, with equity and an honeſt mind; why, this ſhews that we have too great a love and value for theſe Earthly things, when we are taken ſo with the tempting Charms of 'em, that if we cannot fairly court 'em to our Embraces, we will commit a Rape upon 'em and force 'em ſome way or other into our poſſeſſion. When *Naboth*'s Vineyard looks ſo pleaſant and beautifull that *Ahab* will purchaſe it, tho' at the hard rate of Perjury and falſe-Witneſs; when we had rather part with our Vertue, and violate our Conſcience, than let go a preſent intereſt, ſo that when theſe two are put together in the Balance of our cooler Judgment, Earthly Treaſures do much outweigh the Heavenly in our Thoughts, and though they are much lighter in themſelves, yet our affections always caſt the Scales on that ſide; and ſo likewiſe in the poſſeſſion as well as getting of Riches, when

we uſe 'em baſely or not at all, and be unwilling to part with 'em upon a good occaſion, when a decent opportunity calls for 'em, when our poor Brother ſtands in need of 'em, when God or the publick require 'em of us, when we can ſerve the ends of Piety or Charity, or publick good by 'em, then not to be willing to part with 'em, this is a certain ſign that we love 'em too well, that we think nothing ſo good as our Money, and that we count it much more eligible to be Rich, than to be either Good, or Charitable, or Pious, and that we had much rather be one than the other; nay, which is ſtrange, be one than both, ſo little do we value every thing elſe, and think nothing is to be compared to a great heap, and a long inventory, and that what we have in our Cheſts and our Coffers is much more valuable than what we have in our Souls, or than the Soul it ſelf.

3. This comparative precept ſuppoſes that we muſt uſe as much care and diligence to obtain the Heavenly as the Earthly Treaſures, and if Men would once do that, I am ſure they would never miſs of the former; if we would as heartily and diligently ſet about getting Heaven, and making our ſelves Vertuous, as we do about getting a livelihood, and making our ſelves Rich, we ſhould never

never fail of the one, tho' we very often do of the other; a thouſand Accidents and Contingences hinder us of obtaining our worldly aims, and with all our thoughts and toil, and care, we can never compaſs our wiſhes, but when we have tir'd our ſelves with a hot and eager purſuit of theſe worldly things, and followed 'em as cloſe as we could thro' a hundred mazes and labyrinths, yet they fly away, and we can never catch or lay hold of them; But in the Heavenly Treaſures 'tis far otherwiſe, no Man ever miſt 'em that did all he could to obtain 'em, that after he had ſet himſelf ſeriouſly about 'em, uſed his utmoſt endeavour, and perſevered in doing ſo, at laſt he would moſt certainly and infallibly get 'em, if he were no way wanting to himſelf; if he were hearty and reſolved in the buſineſs, and did not by idleneſs, or ſomething elſe, break off his deſigns too ſoon, he would never fail of ſucceſs at the laſt, which ſhould be a very great encouragement to make us more diligent about thoſe Heavenly Treaſures, which have many other conſiderations to excite our induſtry and our labour about 'em, their exceeding value and laſting duration, which are the conſtant motives that put us upon an unwearied care and labour after any thing here: What pains do

do we refuſe, what labour do we count too much to get a plentifull Eſtate, that we may quickly leave, and be but a ſhort time the better for, if it may deſcend to our Children and Family; how can men deny themſelves their eaſe and their quiet, nay their meat and their ſleep, and drudge and toil very willingly for that; nay, how does a poor man labour and ſweat, ſtrain his Nerves and his Muſcles to get Bread, and a mean Livelihood: Why, if we think Heaven is worth our while, do we not uſe as much labour for that, as we are willing to undergo for a leſſer matter? If the Heavenly Treaſures were but of equal worth, were but at the ſame rate with the Earthly, yet why do we not put out our utmoſt ſtrength and vigour, and ſtrive, and run, and contend earneſtly for that prize? If we believed it to be of ſuch great worth and value, as we generally pretend, why cannot we deny our ſelves in ſome little matters for the ſake of Heaven, as we do for to carry on our worldly concerns? Why do we like Children run ſo long, and ſweat and toil our ſelves after a Painted fly, whilſt we Truant and are Lazy, and Neglect our main buſineſs?

4. This

4. This comparative duty enjoyns us to put the Earthly Treaſures to ſuch uſes as to make 'em means and inſtruments toward the obtaining the Heavenly, ſo in the parallel place of St. *Luke*, where he gives an account of this ſame Sermon of our Saviour, by the very ſame precept as 'tis there expreſs'd, we are bid *ſell that we have and give Alms, provide your ſelves bags which wax not old, a Treaſure in the Heavens that faileth not, where no Thief approacheth, neither Moth corrupteth, Luke*, 12. 33. So that ſince theſe Earthly Treaſures are ſo liable to hazards and uncertainties here, ſo much in danger to be torn from us by the hands of violence, or ſubject to ſome other miſchance or caſualty, the beſt way to inſure them, and to make the moſt of 'em, is to employ 'em to Charitable uſes, and the relief of our poor Brethren; this is the ſecure way to make thoſe corruptible things that are ſo tickliſh and uncertain, ſo apt to ſlip away from us, to be our own for ever, this will make thoſe tranſitory and periſhing Riches to laſt for ever; and whereas by keeping 'em very cloſe to our ſelves, and being unwilling to part with any of 'em, we in a ſhort time muſt be utterly deprived of 'em, by this way we return 'em to another World, and ſhall be ſure there

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to enjoy the benefit of 'em, with double intereſt; by this means the Silver and Gold that was but a better ſort of earth than we t ead on, is turned into a Vertue and made matter of true Religion, and by this we ſhow our greater value to Heavenly Treaſures, than the Earthly, when we are willing to part with them to attain the other, when they are our prime ſcope and aim, that bear the chief place in our thoughts, the other but the means and inſtruments to attain it; when we do not account the Earthly Treaſures goods in themſelves, as the Covetous generally do, who think it their great Happineſs to heap up vaſt Riches for no other end beyond the comfortable ſatisfaction of being Rich, whilſt they are ſuch Idolaters, as the Apoſtle calls 'em, *Eph.* 5. 5. that terminate their worſhip upon the very Idols themſelves, and look no further; but to make 'em ſerviceable to the ends of Charity and Beneficence to thoſe who are in want and neceſſity, this is to value that in the firſt place, and thoſe chiefly in order to it, and this is the true uſe that God the Donor of 'em expects of us, and this is not only conſiſtent with laying up to our ſelves Treaſures in Heaven, but the moſt certain way to do it, as I ſhall briefly ſhow by naming a few conſiderations to that purpoſe. As, 1. What-

1. Whatever we do this way we engage God to reward us either in this or another World. *He that hath pity on the poor lendeth to the Lord, and that which he hath given will he pay again, Prov.* 19. 17. God becomes the poor Man's ſurety to us, and 'tis a very great piece of Infidelity not to truſt his word, for the payment of a little ſum hereafter, that we now part with to the poor; nay, it ſhall be no great while before he will take care to repay it us with great advantage; he very often does it preſently in this World, by bleſſing the reſt of our Eſtate the better, for Dedicating ſome part of it as a firſt fruits to his uſe; he has promiſed that *he which giveth to the poor ſhall not lack*; *Prov.* 28. 27. *That the liberal Soul ſhall be made fat*, Prov. 11. 25. Eccleſ. 11. 1. *Caſt thy Bread upon the Waters, for thou ſhalt find it after many days.* Pſ. 41. 1, 2. *Bleſſed is he that conſidereth the poor, the Lord will deliver him in time of trouble, the Lord will preſerve him and keep him alive, and he ſhall be bleſſed upon the Earth.* All which places aſſure us, even of a Temporal Retribution, which the Divine Providence will make to the Charitable Man, and this does for the moſt part, if not always happen, but to be ſure God will greatly recompenſe him at the laſt day.

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2. By thus using our Earthly Treasure, we enrich our Minds with the most excellent Vertue, and the most Christian disposition, and nothing is more Valuable and more Heavenly than this kind, and bountifull, and good habit of Mind, by which we are dispos'd, as we have ability and opportunity, to do good to those who stand any way in need of it; this is the very temper of God, to communicate out of his rich store plentifully to others. Had he been niggardly and kept all to himself, where had we been, and all his Creatures that owe being, and all things to his bounty? Therefore he has commanded no duty so frequently, nor so earnestly as this of Charity and Mercy, so that this often engrosses the sum of the whole Law, and is called Righteousness in general; it is never left out in the Character of good Men in Scripture, but is always made a principal Ingredient in the Composition of that Vertue and Goodness that will prepare and qualifie the Mind for Heaven and Happiness.

3. We cannot make our Earthly Treasures so Beneficial to us any other way, nor turn to so good account, if we would spend 'em to the best purpose; after we have supplied our own wants and just occasions, what is over and above serves only for Vice or Vanity; 'tis but food for

for our Luſts, nouriſhment for Pride, or Intemperance, or Senſuality; the beſt uſe we can make of the overplus, is to do good with it, to comfort our poor Brother who is ready to ſtarve for want of what we profuſely ſquander away, who would be mightily relieved and ſupplied by what we ſpend Vainly, or perhaps Vitiouſly; thus we may both eſcape the temptations of Riches, and alſo make the moſt beneficial uſe of 'em another way, that which would be quite loſt, if laid out upon any thing elſe, will by this means be more fully our own, than what we have under Lock and Key, the poor will keep it ſafer for us than Locks and Bars; what is given to him, is better put out, upon a greater Intereſt and ſurer Fund, than if we had all the Land upon Earth tyed for it; God is bound, as I told you, and is become our debtor thereby; we have made over our Eſtate to him, and he is our Truſtee for it, which 'twas very likely we ſhould loſe quickly, or be robb'd, or ſequeſter'd of, if 'twere in our own name. This is the beſt Merchandice we can make of our ſtock, when we are in a Country where 'tis in danger to be ſeiz'd on, to tranſmit it to our Country, and return it to him who is in Heaven, and will moſt certainly repay it us when we come thither; this is

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to *make our ſelves ſuch friends of the Mammon of Unrighteouſneſs, that when we fail they may receive us into everlaſting Habitations*, as our Saviour ſays, *Luke* 16. 9.

4. I ſhall add but this conſideration, and that I think a very ſtrong one to Men that have thoughts of a reckoning hereafter, that when we ſhall appear before God's Tribunal to give an account of our ſelves and actions, there will be a moſt ſpecial regard had to the diſcharge of this duty above all others, that we ſhall be Examined and Sentenced then, chiefly upon the account of our having relieved the poor Members of Chriſt. So *Mat.* 25. 41. where our Saviour tells us, how the proceſs ſhall be in that great day, the moſt dreadfull Sentence of *Go ye curſed into everlaſting fire*, ſhall be pronounced upon thoſe on the left hand, for this reaſon, *for I was Hungry, and ye gave me no Meat; I was Thirſty, and ye gave me no Drink; I was a Stranger, and ye took me not in; Naked, and ye Cloathed me not; Sick and in Priſon, and ye viſited me not.* This is the particular Crime, the deepeſt Charge of that black Indictment, not ſo much for Injuſtice, for Adultery, for Murder, any of which ſhall yet condemn us at that day, as for Unmercifullneſs and Uncharitableneſs to the poor, which Chriſt takes the moſt unkindly and hardly from us, as done

done to himſelf; But the bleſſed Sentence ſhall be to the Bountifull and to the Mercifull, who have been Charitable to Chriſt in his poor Members, to whom he will pronounce theſe joyfull Words, *v.* 34. *Come ye bleſſed of my Father, enter into the Kingdom prepared for you, from the beginning of the World, for I was an Hungred, and ye gave me Meat; I was Thirſty, and ye gave me Drink; I was a Stranger, and ye took me in; I was Naked, and ye Cloathed me; I was Sick, and ye viſited me; I was in Priſon and ye came unto me.* This is ſingled out rather than any thing elſe, as more regarded by God, than any other Vertue; and if we would ever hear that Sentence from the mouth of Chriſt, pronounced to our ſelves, let us at all times, as we have opportunity, practice this Vertue, and ſo *lay up to our ſelves Treaſures in Heaven, where neither Moth nor Ruſt doth corrupt, and where Thieves do not break through or ſteal.*

The Fifth Sermon.

LUKE XV. 31.

And he ſaid unto him, Son thou art ever with me, and all that I have is thine.

THis is part of the Parable concerning the Prodigal Son, and the anſwer of the Father to the eldeſt Son, who had not been a Prodigal, but *had ſerved his Father many Years, neither tranſgreſſed at any time his Commandments*, v. 29. Notwithſtanding which, the Father ſeem'd to treat his Prodigal and Riotous Son, who had left his Houſe and run away from him, and *devoured his living with Harlots*, v. 30. and waſted his Time and Eſtate in Lewd and Vitious

courſes; to treat him, I ſay, upon his return, with more expreſſions of love and kindneſs and rejoycing than he ever did the other, who had never offended him.

This ſeemed not a juſt and a fair uſage to the elder Brother, as much failing in Juſtice to him as exceeding in kindneſs to the other, too little rewarding the conſtant duty of the one, and too much encouraging the Lewdneſs and Prodigality of the other; ſo that not without good reaſon, he ſeems to take it ill, and to be angry at this unreaſonable dealing of his Father's.

Parables are very good ways of Inſtruction, and very lively Repreſentations of things, or truths by way of Picture or Scene, and Dramatical Hiſtory; now tho' all the parts muſt be ſuitable and agreeable to one another, yet there is a main aim, plot, and deſign that runs thro' the whole, which was chiefly deſigned by it, and is the great ſcope of it, and other things are but as the Circumſtances and Ornaments, the Dreſs and Habit, this is the air, the ſtroke that give life and likeneſs to the whole.

The Parables of this Chapter concerning the loſt Sheep, the loſt piece of Silver, and the returning Prodigal, were deſigned to ſhow how acceptable and well pleaſing

pleaſing to God the Repentance of a Sinner is, and that he ſhall certainly be received very kindly upon it, and to repreſent this after the manner of men, in a way ſuitable and affecting to us; God who is ſaid in Scripture to be angry and provoked at Sinners, is here ſaid to Joy and Rejoyce at their Return and Repentance; The joyfull Father kiſſing and embracing his returning Son, putting the beſt robe on him, and killing the fatted Calf for him, and receiving him with all the expreſſions of Mirth and Rejoycing, this is to repreſent the love and kindneſs of God to a Sinner upon his Repentance; but we muſt not apply Parables too far, for they touch not in all their parts, but only like Globes here and there in a point.

Theſe Parables ſeem at firſt ſight to teach and denote, that the Repentance of a great Sinner in ſome part of his Life, is more pleaſing to God than the conſtant obedience of a good Man all his Life, which undoubtedly can never be true, and therefore the Parable can never mean that, but only by comparative and condeſcending repreſentations to ſhow, that God is very well pleaſed and will certainly accept a Sinner upon his true Repentance; that expreſſion muſt not be underſtood ſtrictly and rigorouſly, *There*

is Joy in Heaven over one ſinner that Repenteth, more than over ninety nine juſt Perſons that need no Repentante, v. 7. the Angels, thoſe lovers of Vertue, cannot but rejoyce as much and more at Mens living always by the Laws of Heaven, as at their ſometimes Repenting for breaking them; and God, like a wiſe and good Father, cannot but be better pleaſed, that his Children were always Dutifull and Vertuous and Obedient, than that they were any time otherwiſe. This is plain and undeniable at firſt ſight; indeed upon a Vitious Son's being reclaimed, a Parent may have a quicker Paſſion and Reſentment, as upon a Child's recovery after a hopeleſs Sickneſs, in which he was given over, his being reſtored to life, as it were, gives a greater Joy to the Parent than if he had been never ill, but this is but the working of Different, Humane, Animal Paſſions in us, and the ebbing and flowing of our Spirits upon apprehenſion of ſome good or evil that greatly affects us; None of this is truly in God, but only the ſeveral acts of his Wiſdom, and Wiſe reſolves of his will, and meant and denoted by them. 'Tis all human and a condeſcention to the Paſſions and Humors of men, to rejoyce more at the finding one loſt Sheep or one loſt piece of Silver, than at a great many that were always

ways ſafe; ſo for a loſt Child's returning home, than for a great many that never were in danger. This is not to be taken ſtrictly, but only as 'tis to teach and repreſent this poſitive truth, that the Return and Repentance of a Sinner is very acceptable and well pleaſing to God, and that he will certainly be received by him; thus in other Parables when Chriſt, to ſhow the power of earneſt and conſtant Prayer, repreſents it by a Widow's importuning an unjuſt Judge, *Luke* 18. Chap. and by a Friend's prevailing to make another riſe, and give him what he wants, not becauſe he is his Friend, but becauſe of his importunity, *Luke* 11. 8. this which is uſual with Men, muſt not be ſtrictly applied to God, as if his bleſſing flowed not ſo much from his own goodneſs as that they were extorted by importunity; ſo in the Parable of the unjuſt Steward, *Luke* 16. and in others, there is not to be a nice Application of every part, but only of the main ſcope and primary deſign, which is as it were the reflex image repreſenting the thing intended, without thoſe Collateral rays, that are but adventitious and adhering to it.

Among the many miſtakes about Repentance, which are not a few, for we have made a ſhift to corrupt moſt of the

poſitive parts of our Religion, and were it not for what is Moral and Natural nothing would ſecure it from being turned into meer Superſtition to ſerve the Luſts and Looſeneſs, and yet ſtupifie the fears, and delude the hopes of Men Sinfully inclined; one, I ſay, of the greateſt miſtakes is, to think a conſtant obedience is not to be preferr'd to the trueſt Repentance, or that God will not be more pleaſed with, and more highly reward the one than the other; The contrary to which is here plainly ſuppoſed and aſſerted, *Son thou art always with me, and all that I have is thine.* Where plainly the Father who Rejoyced ſo much at the returning Prodigal, yet allows a great difference between him and his Innocent Son, who had always ſerved him, and never at any time tranſgreſſed his Commandments. To make out, and illuſtrate this, I ſhall offer the following Particulars,

1. There are a great many I hope in the World, *who*, as our Saviour ſays, *need no Repentance*, *Luke* 15. 7. *i. e.* no ſuch Repentance as is to alter their whole ſtate and ſpiritual Condition, and to change the whole Habit and Temper of their Minds, and from bad men to make them good ones; for they who by means of a good Education have been always brought up

up Vertuously and Religiously and preserved from any great and wilfull Sin, who never erred from the paths of Vertue nor stept into those of Sin and Death, these have a Title to the Character of *Zacharias* and *Elizabeth*, *Luke*, 1. 6. that *they are Righteous before God, walking in all the Commandments and Ordinances of the Lord blameless*, and these who never defiled themselves need not to be washed and cleansed as those who have made themselves filthy and impure; they deserve not the Character given to the vile and wretched sinners in Scripture, nor need such exhortations to Repentance as are given to them, and which some very indiscreetly apply to all alike, even in their Prayers and Confessions, without considering the plain difference of the case, such as those spoke to the wicked *Jews*, and whole *Jewish* Nation, *The whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint, from the sole of the foot even unto the head there is no soundness in it, but wounds and bruises and putrifying sores, Isai.* 1. 5, 6. and therefore those were Commanded to *wash themselves, make themselves clean, put away the evil of their doings*, v. 16. and they were promised, *tho' their sins were as Scarlet, they should be white as Snow, tho' they were red as Crimson, they should be as Wool*, v. 18. which is great encouragement to the worst of Sinners

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to Repent, but God forbid that the sins of all should be of so deep a die or deserve so black and sad a Character; No, many, I hope a great many, have kept their Innocence and Whiteness, and Purity, and not defil'd themselves with any great Sin, since they came out of the Laver of Regeneration, and these are they who need no Repentance, *i. e.* not that great Repentance that a willfull sinner does.

All stand in need, in daily need of Repentance in some sense, and are to pray God to forgive them their Trespasses every day, *i. e.* their lesser Sins of frailty and infirmity, which the best Men are not free from, but this is very different from such willfull great Sins as destroy a Mans good state, and put him into a state of Damnation and exclude him out of Heaven if he live in them; The exhortations and advices to Repentance in the New Testament as well as the Old, are given chiefly to very Vile and Lewd Sinners, and in this Sense *Christ came not so much to call the Righteous as Sinners, to Repentance.* The *Jews*, even the most Famous amongst them for Sanctity and Piety were guilty of wretched Hypocrisie and horrid Immorality, as our Saviour charges the Scribes and Pharisees; and the Heathens before they turned Christians,

ans, lived in all manner of Impurity and Immorality, *Walking according to the course of this World, according to the Prince of the power of the Air, the spirit that now worketh in the Children of Disobedience, having their Conversation in the Lusts of the Flesh, fullfilling the desires of the Flesh and of the Mind*, Ephes. 2. 2, 3. who walked some time and lived in *Fornication, Uncleanness, inordinate Affection, Concupiscence and Covetousness, which is Idolatry*, Colos. 3. 5. who were *Adulterers, Idolaters, Effeminate, abusers of themselves with mankind, Thieves, Covetous, Drunkards, Revilers, Extortioners*, as the same Apostle tells them, some of them were 1 *Cor.* 6. 9, 10. In the first Chapter of the Epistle to the *Romans*, he gives still a worse and more abominable account of them, now even these *were Washed, were Sanctified, were Justified*, by becoming true Penitents and true Christians, *in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, and by the spirit of our God*, 1 Cor. 6. 11. by *putting off the old Man*, i. e. the old Heathenish Sinfull life, and *putting on the new Man*, i. e. a Christian Conversation, *Col.* 3. 9, 10. they who were once the Servants of sin, being now *made free from sin, and become Servants of Righteousness*, Rom. 6. 18. and *they who yielded their members Servants to Uncleanness and to Iniquity unto Iniquity, now yielding their members*

bers Servants to Righteouſneſs unto Holineſs, v. 19.

Now all this is ſpoke to thoſe who were vile ſinners, and Heathens before they became Chriſtians, and it muſt be a ſad and lamentable caſe to apply it to any that have been bred up in Chriſtianity, their condition muſt be much worſe and more inexcuſable, and not ſo eaſily remediable as the others, but none of this can or ought in any manner, to be applied to thoſe who have lived Vertuouſly thro' the general courſe of their lives, and have, tho' with many failings, never been ſinners in a high ſenſe, for in a low one we have all been ſo; but many I doubt not, all their lives were not in an ill ſtate, nor committed any ſin to put 'em into it, but like *Enoch*, walked with God all their lives, and like *Job* were *Perfect and Upright that feared God and eſchewed evil*, *Job* 1. 1. that were always Children of God and never Children of the Devil, that were never Prodigals, but always ſerved their Father, neither tranſgreſſed at any time his Commandments. Now the condition of theſe is a great deal more Happy and Preferable to that of the moſt Penitent ſinner, they are more in the favour of God, and ſhall be more highly rewarded by him; *Son thou art always with me, and all that I have is thine.*

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2. The difficulties and hazards and dangers are nothing ſo great to thoſe, as to penitent Sinners and Prodigals; Nothing is ſo hard and difficult as to overcome old Vitious Cuſtoms and root out old Sinfull Habits that have been a great while growing and prevailing upon us, this is plucking out a right Eye and cutting off a right Hand, for ſins grow dear and natural to men by Cuſtom, and very hard to be parted with; like Diſeaſes that are grown Chronical, they are hard to be cured; and tho' with long Courſes and many Remedies they may be cured and abated, yet there will be great danger of having ſome ſpices of them, now and then, and of their often returning, and the ſinner's Relapſing again into them, for there will be a diſpoſition and Inclination to them, and upon every little Temptation the Fancy and Imagination will be apt to be turned to them, and put a ſtrong byaſs upon the Mind, to carry it that way; many a good Man finds it very hard to govern the Paſſions, the deſires and inclinations he has given way to before he came to ſuch a full ſenſe of Religion, and how muſt a ſinner deny all his old Luſts and Affections that he has indulged ſo long, and break off the old cuſtoms and ways he has been uſed to, and be always ſtrugling with thoſe Enemies that

that he has let in, so that they have made many strong holds to themselves, and 'tis now more hard to expell and drive them out, and tho' they are sometimes vanquisht, yet they will often rally again, and a Man must keep a perpetual Watch and Guard against them; Vice, when it has once got possession of a Man, is not easily cast out, but the fancied good and the imagined pleasure sticks and remains in the Thoughts, Fancy, and Memory, and the Appetite is not easily weaned from what it has so long indulged, but the Lust and Inclination is apt to kindle upon every like Object and Temptation; so hard and so rare it is to recover an old sinner from a long habit of wickedness, that as Experience gives us but few Examples of this, and most of the good Men in the World are such as were never bad, so that the Prophet to show its great difficulty compares it to a natural impossibility, *Can the* Æthiopian *change his skin, or the Leopard his spots, then may ye also do good that are accustomed to do evil*, Jer. 13. 23. but with God all things are possible, and he is said to give a new Heart and a new Soul, and to make us new Creatures, when he brings us by his Grace to true Repentance, and 'tis a kind of *creating us again to new works*; *a raising us from the dead, a quickning, a giving us a new life,*

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in the Scripture phraſe, when from bad he makes us good ones, which is ſomething greater than creating us at firſt, becauſe in the other there is no hindrance and obſtacle in the ſubject, as there is in this.

Many are the hardſhips and difficulties that a ſincere Penitent finds in overcoming an unruly Appetite, an irregular Paſſion, a beloved Luſt and Inclination, which were all made ſo by the ſtrength of Cuſtom and long Habit, and which would have been much eaſier maſtered, had they not been ſo long indulged and grown upon him. Many a ſinner when his reaſon is convinced, and he ſees the evil of his ſins, and would gladly leave, if a faint wiſh would do it, yet is ſuch a ſlave to them by long Cuſtom, that they lead him Captive at their pleaſure, and he cannot break the Fetters, and ſhake off the Chains that he has made himſelf, and which are very uneaſie to him, now all this a Man is free from by an early Religion and a conſtant Obedience, and being never engaged in the ways of wickedneſs, which are ſo hard to get out of.

3. There cannot be that full comfort and ſecurity in the Return and Repentance of a ſinner as in a conſtant and unbroken Obedience all a Man's life, for tho'

tho' there is certain Pardon promiſed and aſſured to ſuch a Penitent, yet no Man can be ſo ſure that he has fully repented of any ſin, as that he has once committed it, but there will be ſome fears and doubts and miſgivings ſtill in his Mind, upon the remembrance of it, which he can never be ſo free from, as if he had never been guilty of it; and 'tis fit indeed this ſhould always be, that a Penitent ſhould be always humble and a little afraid, and ſhould not be fully confident, as if he had been always Innocent; Fear is the neceſſary puniſhment and conſequent of ſin and guilt, and the ſinner ſhould tremble at the thoughts of God's Judgments, and the deſert of his ſin, tho' they are not inflicted upon him, and tho' he has his pardon ſealed in the Blood of Chriſt, yet he ought to look upon it with tears in his Eyes, and a mixture both of Joy and Sorrow; The Goſpel declares only a general pardon to thoſe who Repent, but no Man can ſee his own name particularly expreſſed in it, nor is he ſure of it any farther than he is of his Repentance, and a man of Fear and Caution, and not of Preſumption, will have ſome doubts that his Repentance is not ſo full and ſo perfect as it ought to be; and being once a Malefactor condemn'd both by God and his own Conſcience tho' he hath reaſonable

ſonable hopes of Pardon, yet will be more afraid to be Judged, than if his Conſcience had wholly acquitted him, and he could never have charged himſelf with any great Crime; for that will ſtrike him with more certain fear than he can have certain hopes of his particular pardon.

4. Neither ſhall ſuch a penitent be ſo much in God's favour, or ſo highly rewarded by him, as a Man of more conſtant and greater Vertues: This is a Rule I think of eternal Juſtice, and follows from God's *rendring to all Men according to their works*, as the Scripture ſpeaks, which would not be if there were not a proportion of the reward to the work, as well as a reward in general. God indeed out of his great Grace, will accept a great ſinner upon his Repentance, and receive him into his favour, and paſs by and forgive his paſt offences. But 'tis his becoming a good Man qualifies and entitles him to this; for God can love no other; and the more any is a good Man, the more he will be beloved by him, and the more highly rewarded at the laſt day: 'tis great Mercy and Favour in God, and what Chriſt has purchaſed for us, to accept of an imperfect and after goodneſs, and broken obedience, inſtead of what is whole and entire, which is his due; and not puniſh us for our paſt Sins and Diſobedience

after we have left them, as he might do in ſtrict Juſtice; but ſtill 'tis only our Obedience and Goodneſs which (being after our Diſobedience and Sin is called Repentance) is acceptable and pleaſing to God, and it would be more ſo, had it been more conſtant, unbroken, and uninterrupted; and 'tis only for that as a Qualification and Condition in our ſelves, for which he will reward us, and the more and greater that is, the greater ſhall be our reward.

Indeed in caſe a Penitent is after his ſins brought to love much and to obey much, and to be more abundantly Zealous in good works, and doing his duty, to make amends as much as he is able for his paſt failures, and repair the Divine Honour, and expreſs his Gratitude for the Mercy ſhown him, and ſo takes care to riſe to higher degrees of Vertue, and perform more ſignal acts of Obedience; ſo that his fall makes him riſe higher, and he redeems his loſs with greater gain and improving more in Grace and Goodneſs afterwards: this ſhall entitle him to greater rewards, and to God's ſpecial favour; not barely becauſe he Repented, but becauſe upon his Repentance, he became a better Man, and went faſter, and made more progreſs in the ways of Vertue, after he had got into them; but he that never wander-

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ed out of them, nor never ſtray'd into the ways of Sin, but always kept on in the path of Vertue, which he was early entred into, is a thouſand times more likely to go farther, and make a greater progreſs in Vertue, and attain to higher degrees and improvements of it, than the other; and conſequently to be more highly rewarded by God, the impartial Judge and diſtributer of rewards and puniſhments at the laſt day. There are ſeveral manſions in our Father's houſe, and ſeveral degrees of Glory in the Kingdom of Heaven: thoſe who have been more conſtantly and more highly Virtuous and Obedient, or have done or ſuffered more for Chriſt and his Religion; theſe ſhall have Crowns of greater weight and brightneſs, and ſhall ſhine in a higher Orb, among thoſe Stars of Heaven, who differ from one and another in Glory, according to their different Virtues and Attainments.

5. This makes us more truly Chriſtians and more the Children of God, and live more anſwerably to the Ends and Deſigns of our Religion; for tho' Chriſtianity is to reſtore and recover loſt and undone mankind, and does it chiefly by the benefit of Repentance, which is the great Duty and the great Privilege of the Goſpel, which upon the account of

Chriſt and his undertaking for us, puts ſinners into a good ſtate, a ſtate of Favour and Reconciliation with God, who were Enemies to him before, and makes thoſe the Children of God, who were the Children of the Devil; for all Men in a ſtate of Sin are the Children of the Devil in the Scriptures account, *He that commiteth Sin is of the Devil*, 1 John 3. 8. and *whoſoever is born of God*, as every good Chriſtian is, *doth not commit Sin*, v. 9.

Repentance therefore, which is a paſſage from a ſtate of Sin and Death, to a ſtate of Vertue and Holineſs, is truly and properly rather a duty antecedent and diſpoſing to Chriſtianity, than one under it; and therefore it was Preach'd both to the *Jews* and *Gentiles*, by Chriſt and his Apoſtles, as previous and preparatory to their becoming Chriſtians, *Repent for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand*, Mat. 4. 17. *Repent and be Baptized*, Acts 2. 38. for before Men turned Chriſtians they were ſuppoſed to Repent of their paſt Sins, and to reſolve upon a new courſe of life, to renounce all their former evil ways, to *put off the old Man*, *i. e.* all their old acts and habits of Sin, and to *put on the new Man*, and to *put on Chriſt*, and not to walk henceforth as others, who were not Chriſtians walked; for tho' they were accounted as ſinners before, yet now they

were

were to be Saints, devoted to a Holy life and wholly abandoning all Vice and Wickedneſs, according to their Baptiſmal vow. It was far therefore from the deſign of Chriſtianity to ſuppoſe Men to fall into a ſtate of Sin after their Chriſtianity, and to be as bad and as wicked as they were before they were Chriſtians; if they were, and fell into any great Sins, the Chriſtian Church at firſt turned them out of its Communion as Apoſtates to their Religion, and Renegado's to their Holy Profeſſion; and would not without great difficulty admit them again to the benefits of Chriſtianity and hopes of Pardon: ſo that they accounted not thoſe for Chriſtians who were Penitents and who ſtood in need of Repentance for any great Sin; and indeed, he is not a Chriſtian who does ſo, he is fallen off from his Chriſtianity, and has quitted his Baptiſmal vow, and has forfeited the right of it, and has put himſelf out of the Chriſtian ſtate, who is guilty of any mortal Sin, and is in a ſtate of Penance for it; and the Chriſtian Church at firſt would hardly have owned and received him again; no, not in *Articulo Mortis*: ſo great a diſgrace, and ſo horrid a reflection they thought it upon Chriſtianity, for a Chriſtian to be guilty of any willfull and notorious

Sin: I confeſs this early Diſcipline was too ſevere, never to admit ſuch a Penitent again to Communion, and looked as if no Sins were pardonable after Baptiſm; which is a hard and untrue Doctrine, and therefore the Church altered its firſt Diſcipline, and condemned the *Novatians* who ſtuck too cloſe to it, and who would allow the Church no power to grant the benefit of Repentance and Communion in that caſe, whatever God might do; but upon relaxing the Canons too far, and falling afterwards into another extream, upon the looſeneſs and corruption of Chriſtians, and their degenerating from the Primitive ſtrictneſs and genuine deſign of Chriſtianity, Repentance when it came to be turned into a ſlight Penance, became a very common and perfunctory and eaſie matter; and Men began the round of Sinning and Repenting, Repenting and Sinning, and of taking it as a ſort of ſtanding Phyſick, to be repeated *toties quoties*, and took perhaps at ſome ſet times, or Spring and Fall; and that this was ſufficient, tho' they lived in their Vices and Debaucheries, and unlawfull Liberties, and never became ſuch good Men and true Chriſtians, as the Goſpel was deſigned to make them. Now this is like a Man's always uſing Phyſick, but never to be well, and only to do it

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that he may keep his Diſeaſe, and it may not as he thinks, prove mortal to him (when he is loth to take away the cauſe of it) by virtue of a preſent and eaſie Remedy. Now this is horribly perverting and abuſing the Notion and Deſign of Chriſtian Repentance, which is not a Contrivance to let us be bad Men, and live in our Sins, and yet hope for Pardon and Salvation upon a little ſudden Sorrow, miſcalled Repentance, now and then for them; but to encourage us wholly to leave them upon the hopes and aſſurance of Pardon when we do ſo, and to engage us to the practice of Obedience and a Holy Life ever after, which is the only thing which makes us true Chriſtians, and entitles to the Happineſs and Salvation of another World. And let no man deceive himſelf, and think he ſhall have the benefit of Repentance, who is not made a good Man by it; or think Repenting and Sorrowing at the laſt will do the buſineſs, inſtead of a good life; or that without actual Holineſs and Obedience, he can ſee God or enter into Heaven: and let none fall into that other miſtake, as prejudicial to Religion, to think a man that lives Innocently and Vertuouſly, and Religiouſly all his days, and performs a conſtant unbroken Obedience to God all his life, ſhall not be more accepted

by God, and more highly rewarded by him, than he that has lived wickedly and been a Prodigal, tho' he Returns and Repents in time, and is pardoned and accepted by God; for tho' such an one shall be kindly and graciously received by his Heavenly Father, and with all Demonstrations of Love and Compassion, be Embraced and Treated by him, and owned to be his Son, and received again into his Family; yet he that never left his Father's house, but was always with him and served him, and never transgres's'd at any time his commands, he it is of whom it will be said, *Son, thou art always with me, and all that I have is thine.*

I shall only draw a few inferences from what has been said, and so conclude.

1. This allows all that is due to Repentance, and all the Encouragements and Motives to it: Repentance is the great Gospel-Medicine, the Cure for our greatest Sins, and the most mortal Diseases of the Soul, if it be compounded as it ought and taken in time; if it be made up not only of sorrow for what is past, and good purposes and resolutions for the future, but of actual Amendment and Reformation, *Turning away from our wickedness that we have committed, and doing that which is Lawful and Right* afterwards, then 'tis such an effectu-

effectual and never failing Remedy as by the merits of it, and the Grace of the Gospel will take off the greatest and vilest Sins, that the worst sinner ever fell into; but still, tho' the Medicine is Good and Infallible for every Disease, yet 'tis much better to be always well and have an intire and perfect health, than often to need it, or make use of it; for tho' the goodness of it be never so great, yet 'tis but in order to an end, which is to recover health that was lost, and to restore us to that soundness that we wanted.

'Tis the great Mercy of God, and the great Grace and Favour of the Gospel, and the great Purchase of Christ's Blood, to have the Privilege of Repentance granted to Sinners, in so large and full a manner, so as to be restored to God's Favour and reconciled to him upon their return, as if they had never offended him; to have all the guilt and punishment of their past Sins wholly taken off, as if they had never committed them; to be *recti in curia*, pardoned, and in as good state as if they had been always Innocent: This should mightily encourage and prevail upon Sinners to Repent and leave their Sins when they are sure of this, as they are by the Gospel; When *tho' their Sins be as Scarlet, they shall be white as Snow; tho they were*

were red like Crimſon, they ſhould be as Wool, as the Evangelical Prophet ſpeaks, *Iſa.* 1. 18. *i. e.* tho' they were ſins of the deepeſt Die, or higheſt Nature, yet they ſhould be wholly done away and forgiven upon true Repentance, from which no Perſon is excluded.

How muſt this encourage the greateſt Sinners if they have any ſenſe of Religion or another World left upon 'em, to come off from their Sins? how comfortable muſt it be to a poor wretch, lying under the ſenſe of his own guilt, and the fears and horrors of his own Conſcience, and the dread of God's Judgments, and of Eternal Miſery, to have theſe glad Tydings proclaimed to him? how will this revive his deſponding Soul, and chear his ſunk Spirit, and like a pardon brought to a Condemned Malefactor, in the Cart, or upon the Gibbet, reſtore him to life and to unſpeakable joy and gladneſs? Now this is offered to every Sinner by the Goſpel, if he repent and turn from his Sins however great they have been, and lead a new life, and become a new Man, and a new Creature before he dies; What can be deſired more by any reaſonable Creature? or what more can God offer? Would any deſire to live and go on in his Sins, and yet be forgiven? This is for God to give up his Laws, his Government,

ment, and to grant a Liberty to his Creatures to be Rebellious and Disobedient, and have no Check or Controul upon them; 'tis the utmost a good God can grant, or a wicked man can desire, to be pardoned upon his Repentance and Amendment: but his Repenting and Amending is with sorrow for what is past, doing his duty for the future as he ought always to have done it, performing that Obedience which he ought always to have performed; and now this is the best thing next to the having done it and performed it always, but it can by no means be thought to be so good as that. Repenting is like a Man's setting up again, that was once broke, and compounding with his Creditors, and paying a part he owed them instead of the whole; God is pleased to accept of the broken, and after-obedience of a Sinner for some part of his Life, instead of that entire and unbroken one which is due from him all his life. 'Tis God's great Grace and Mercy to do this, and what he is no way obliged to, for he might have damned us for every willfull sin, and never have pardoned us tho' we had afterwards Repented of it; this is meer free Grace which we owe to Christ and the Gospel, and God was no way obliged to it, either in Justice or by his natural Goodness, but he might

might have denied it to mankind as he has done to other of his Creatures, the Devils and the fallen Angels: but ſtill the deſign of God in granting us this Favour and this mighty privilege by the Goſpel is to encourage us to Obedience, to perſwade us to leave our Sins and to bring us to true Holineſs and Goodneſs of Life, when we have been faulty and defective in theſe before; 'tis not to encourage us in our Sins, or give us any Licence or Diſpenſation to commit 'em, becauſe we may Repent of them; this is a horrid abuſe and perverting the Grace of the Goſpel and turning it into Wantonneſs and Looſeneſs: but the End and Deſign of all this is to make thoſe good men who have been Sinners, to make thoſe Obedient who have been Diſobedient, either in general or any inſtance. Now therefore 'tis much better to have been always thus, to have been always Good and always Obedient thro' the whole courſe of our lives; this is the beſt thing and the very ſame End more fully and perfectly attained; this is deſigned by Repentance: As Health is the deſign of taking Phyſick, and to be well, and ſound, of uſing Remedies and Medicines; and thoſe who are always healthfull, and always ſound, and always well, are in a much better condition than thoſe who ſtand

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in need of a Cure, tho' it be never ſo certain and infallible.

2. I ſpeak this all the while of Repentance from great and wilfull ſins, from a habit of them in our lives, or at leaſt a voluntary practice of them at ſome time or other; and this Repentance, I hope, there are many that need not, who were never ill perſons all their lives, nor ever guilty of any ſuch one great and mortal ſin, as ſhould put them into an ill and damnable ſtate, and exclude them out of Heaven, had they died. I ſpeak not now of the ill ſtate of all mankind by the fall, or by our original Corruption and Depravation; for that is took off by Chriſt the ſecond *Adam*, and we are put into a good ſtate by the Goſpel and by our Baptiſm, ſo that no Man is in any danger of Damnation, but upon his committing ſome wilfull and known ſins, ſuch as the Scripture declares are damnable, and exclude from Heaven: He therefore that has been free from thoſe, tho' not free from all ſins, which no man is or can be all his life, no, not in his beſt ſtate, but ſome Infirmity, ſome Imperfection, ſome ſin of Frailty, or Ignorance, or Surprize will beſet him; He, I ſay, that has lived free from all wilfull known ſins, and not allowed himſelf in any voluntary breach of God's Laws, tho' he has not kept them ſo perfectly

fectly and exactly as he ought to do; but has always had a regard to Religion and his Duty, and never violated them in any great inſtance; he was always a Child of God and never forfeited that Title, he was never a Prodigal and run away from his Father's houſe, nor waſted his Subſtance in Riotous living, but like the dutifull and elder Son always ſerved his Father, neither at any time tranſgreſs'd his Commandments: He never wandered out of the paths of Vertue, nor never let his ſteps take hold of death; he never defil'd his Virgin Innocence, nor fullied and blemiſh'd his Baptiſmal Purity; nor fell into, nor wallowed in any great ſin, and ſo needeth not to be waſhed and cleanſed and purified as a ſinner in a higher ſenſe needeth; and this is the Happy the Bleſſed Perſon, whom I prefer to the beſt Penitent and the trueſt Convert, as the Parable here does.

3. This ſhows the good of early Obedience and the great Happineſs and Advantage of a Vertuous and Religious Education, and the great Obligation there is for Parents to take care of this, and the great thankfullneſs, which thoſe owe to God, and their Parents, who have had the benefit of it: for nothing makes Vertue and Religion ſo eaſie or ſo acceptable to us as to have them taught and inſtill'd

ſtill'd into us in our tender years; when like ſoft Wax, we are capable of any Impreſſions, and yet grow hard and retain them afterwards. When the Seeds of Virtue are early Planted in our hearts, before Vitious Habits or Inclinations are grown up in them, and a ſenſe of Religion takes the firſt poſſeſſion of us, and anticipates and prevents the power of our own Luſts or of evil Examples; then Virtue becomes natural to us, and Cuſtom makes it both very eaſie to be practis'd and hard to be overcome: for let the Habit and Cuſtom be equal, and I doubt not but there is as much difficulty for a Vertuous Perſon to become Vitious, as for a Vitious Perſon to be made Vertuous; It muſt be with great violence and reluctancy that ſuch an one is brought to commit a wilfull Sin, as well as the other to forſake it; and therefore Scripture repreſents both the one and the other as if they were morally impoſſible: As they who are accuſtomed to do Evil, can as hardly learn to do Good, as the *Æthiopian* can change his Skin or the Leopard his Spots, ſo *he that is born of God cannot Sin*, 1 *John* 3. 9. I doubt not therefore but moſt of the good men that are, or ever were in the World, are ſuch as have been Vertuouſly and Religiouſly Educated and brought up; and but few of thoſe in proportion who have been other-

otherwiſe, have been reclaim'd and brought off from the Lewdneſs and Debauchery they contracted when they were young. 'Tis a very hard and difficult thing to make a bad Man a good one, the hardeſt thing in the World, what the powerfull Operation of God's Grace is neceſſary to, and what it often cannot effect, thro' the ſtubbornneſs of the Will, and indiſpoſition of the Subject; hence thoſe complaints and expoſtulations, *I would have healed them but they would not be healed*, Jerem. 51. 9. *Turn ye, turn ye, why will ye die? Oh, that my people would have hearkned unto me*, and of Sinners *reſiſting, grieving, and quenching the Holy Ghoſt*, and that *God's Spirit ſhall not always ſtrive with them*, and the like; which ſhows the ſtrength and power of ill habits, and how hard 'tis even by all means to get rid of them; and how much happier it is to be engaged in an early Obedience and determined by a Vertuous Education, than to be afterwards ſtruggling with them.

4. This prevents the common and dangerous miſtakes about Repentance, whereby Men make it a reſerve to themſelves to excuſe them from a Religious and Vertuous, and Holy life; and think that by means of that they ſhall avoid all the miſchief of their ſins at laſt, and be as ſafe and as ſecure of Heaven and their eternal Salvation, tho' they live never ſo looſely and care-

carelesly, as if their whole lives had been spent in a course of Vertue and Religion. 'Tis but Repenting before they die, and that as little before as they can, if they can nick it right, and are not cut off suddenly and unexpectedly, which is but an accident that happens only to few, and the great work and business is done; by a true Sorrow and some sincere Resolutions, and an Instantaneous change of mind, as well as by the most intire Vertue and constant Obedience of a Man's whole life. If so, most Men's Sins and Lusts will perswade 'em to indulge and gratify 'em the greatest part of their lives; if they cannot wholly bring 'em off from a sense and belief of Religion, they will thus corrupt Religion and make it thereby comply with them; and by these false notions of Repentance, raise hopes to themselves of escaping all the mischief of their Sins and their ill lives, and saving themselves by virtue of this Repentance at the last, without leading a good life, which they will therefore be glad to excuse themselves from, as not absolutely necessary; and so wholly trust and depend and venture upon the other way. Now this is putting a trick upon God and Religion, and being too hard for 'em upon their own Terms (as they think) tho' it is indeed

putting a trick upon themſelves and miſerably deluding themſelves into deſtruction, by thus abuſing this privilege of Repentance, and making this Grant and Conceſſion of the Goſpel to deſtroy the Goſpel it ſelf, and all the deſign of it, which was to make men live well, and bring them off from their Sins, and not at all encourage them in 'em; whereas by thus perverting the Grace of the Goſpel, and by wrong notions and wretched miſtakes about Repentance, the Obligations to actual Holineſs and Obedience are taken off, and a Man may ſecure Heaven, and his own Salvation without thoſe by another and much ſhorter and eaſier way; which is by Repentance at the laſt, which ſhall be as ſafe to our ſelves, and as acceptable to God, and as well rewarded by him as the other. Now I know but one way of ſaving a Man's Soul and going to Heaven, and that is by a good life and by actual Holineſs and Obedience; Repentance is the bringing a ſinner to theſe; and if he do not do this, tho' the Sorrow be never ſo great, it is not true Repentance nor will be effectual to his Salvation; 'tis the Obedience and Holineſs that he performs after his Diſobedience and Wickedneſs, which conſtitutes and compleats his Repentance and entitles him to the Divine favour and acceptance, and

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to the rewards of Heaven and another World; and the greater and perfecter and more entire this Obedience hath been, the more it will be accepted, and the more rewarded by a Righteous and Juſt God, who will be Mercifull to Sinners when they Repent and turn to their Duty and Obedience, and will accept and reward their broken and imperfect Obedience; but not in ſo high a degree as the conſtant and unbroken and early and entire Obedience of Vertuous and Good men all their lives.

Laſtly this Notion of an early Virtue and conſtant Obedience being preferable to the trueſt Repentance, ſtands upon the plaineſt principles of Religion and ſecures thoſe evident Doctrines, upon which all Practical Religion and the obligations of it are built; ſuch as theſe, that God *will reward every one* at the laſt day *according to their works*, and therefore in proportion to them, and therefore thoſe who have *ſowed plenteouſly ſhall reap plenteouſly*, and that nothing but actual Holineſs and Obedience can fit us to ſee God and enter into Heaven, and make us meet, and qualify us for the inheritance of the Saints in light. Theſe are ſuch plain and undeniable principles both from Reaſon and Scripture, that no Doctrine which oppoſes them and is inconſiſtent with them,

can be true; and therefore a late and dying Repentance that brings forth no fruits of Obedience, cannot be ſufficient for Salvation, as not coming up to thoſe conditions which are abſolutely requir'd by the Goſpel to make us capable of Heaven; ſince none but good Men, who either always were ſo, or at leaſt, who become ſuch after they were otherwiſe, can go to Heaven; and the more good and the more obedient and vertuous any Man hath been in his life, the greater and higher rewards he ſhall have in another World, for *as one Star differeth from another Star in Glory, ſo alſo ſhall it be at the Reſurrection of the dead*, as the Apoſtle ſpeaks, where ſome ſhall ſhine in a higher Orb, and with greater Luſtre, and have Crowns of greater weight and brightneſs, who have either done or ſuffer'd more for Chriſt and God and Religion than others: and therefore they who have been more conſtantly and more highly Vertuous all their lives, ſhall be more highly rewarded by a Juſt and Righteous God in that Heavenly Kingdom, where Chriſt tells us *are many Manſions*, and where no doubt are ſeveral degrees of Happineſs, according to Mens ſeveral Actions and Vertues. Tho' the Penitent and the Prodigal ſhall upon their return be received into their Father's houſe, and be kindly

kindly embraced and entertain'd by him; yet their Portion ſhall not be equal to the Son that was always Dutifull and always Obedient, *Son thou art always with me, and all that I have is thine.* God grant that all good Men may ſo perſevere in Holineſs and Obedience, and all Sinners may ſo timely Repent and be brought off from their Sins, that we may all in due time be received into thoſe Manſions of Joy, where all Sin ſhall be done away, and there ſhall be no more Repentance, and all Virtue and Obedience Crowned with Glory and Immortality, thro' Jeſus Chriſt.

The Sixth Sermon.

ACTS XVI. v. 30. latter part.

Sirs, what muſt I do to be ſaved.

THis great queſtion is ask'd by one in great trouble and concern, when he was affrighted in the night by a ſudden Earth-quake, which ſhook the Foundations of the Houſe or Priſon where he was, v. 27. and ſo he was awakened into a ſenſe of preſent danger, and this brought him to conſider what was future and greater. God does often rowſe up Men's ſleepy and ſenſeleſs and *Lethargic* Minds, by ſome preſent Terror, Judgment, or Affliction, which brings them to conſider the concerns of their Souls and an another World, when no-

thing elſe will: This ſhakes off their thoughtleſs ſecurity, and alarms their ſtupid and unthinking Minds, to look about them, and ſee what a dangerous condition they are in; and fear is a very proper principle for beginning Religion; it's one of the greateſt paſſions that belong to our Nature; and then there is a good ground for it, and it only opens our Eyes to let us ſee a real danger, that ſo we may avoid it, and keep out of it: It is very uſefull and a great branch of that ſelf-preſervation, which is a principle that lies at the root of our very beings; had we no ſenſe of an Evil coming upon us, we ſhould run into it blindfold, and leap down the precipice we did not ſee, which would be never the leſs hurtfull to us; when fear indeed makes a danger where there is none, or repreſents it greater than it is, when it frights the mind with fancied Spectres and imaginary Mormo's, or makes it afraid of its own ſhadow, it's then a weak, a mean, an unmanly Paſſion: but when the danger is real and great and likely, it's ſtupid blindneſs not to ſee it, and raſh madneſs for that reaſon to run upon it. The concerns of another World are both certain and important, and he whoſe Mind has no reaſonable fear or juſt dread and apprehenſion of them, is like *Damocles* with a naked

ked and pointed Sword hanging over his head by a ſingle hair, but he ſits ſecurely, and does not ſee it. The evils and dangers of a future ſtate are very terrible, and may be, as far as we know, very near us; and they are never the leſs near, nor never the leſs real for our not believing, or not having a ſenſe of them. It's very happy therefore if our fear awakens us to conſider of them, whilſt we have means and opportunity to take care to prevent them; that before we feel them we think of them, and do not like *Dives*, then lift up our Eyes when we are in the midſt of Torments: it's then too late to have a ſenſe of them, when we cannot get out of them. A wiſe man would therefore ſo conſider them before-hand, either out of a juſt fear or dread of them, or from a wiſe care and concern for his own Happineſs, that whether any extraordinary providence ſtartl'd his Mind, or it were more freely left to its own thoughts, yet it ſhould frequently and ſeriouſly ask it ſelf this queſtion, *what ſhall I do to be ſaved?* To be ſaved is ſtrictly to be delivered from a great danger we were likely to fall into, to be ſnatch'd like a fire-brand out of the fire, and like one that was ſinking to be catch'd hold on and preſerved; but it alſo includes in it a poſitive Salvation as well

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as a negative, and ſo comprehends that Happineſs which is contrary to the miſery we are ſecured from; he who is ſaved from death gains life by that means, and he who is ſaved from Hell gains Heaven, and ſo both are meant and included in the word Salvation: I ſhall conſider at preſent the great importance of this queſtion, *What ſhall I do to be ſaved*; and ſecondly, the true anſwer and reſolution to it. Firſt, of the importance of it; and it is certainly the greateſt queſtion to us in the World, how we may be delivered from the dangers and evils of the next World, and how we may eſcape, as the Scripture ſpeaks, the Wrath to come, and ſo ſecure to our ſelves that eternal Good and Happineſs, which we call Heaven. We can none of us expect to live always here; there muſt be a time, and we know not how ſoon, but we are ſure it's not very long, when we muſt take leave of this World and all that is in it; and it concerns us to think what ſhall become of us when that fatal minute ſhall come, as it certainly will, that ſhall make this body of ours a cold lump, and put an end to all our preſent Enjoyments; When darkneſs and the ſhadow of death ſhall let down the Curtain, and put an end to all theſe lower Scenes, and to all the Actions of this life,

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we cannot think there is then an end of our being; hardly any of mankind ever thought so, our own thoughts tell us otherwise, and Revelation assures us to the contrary, and we have as much Evidence as we can have, till we come thither, as is consistent with Faith, and comes not up to Sense. We cannot then but be very sollicitous, what shall become of our naked Souls when they are stript of these fleshly Bodies, and what condition they shall be in in the other world: We know in general how different the state is there; there are Joys unspeakable on the one hand, and Torments intolerable on the other; and according as we believe the greatness and reality of both those, so must we be concerned about this question, *How we shall be saved*? That is, how we shall obtain the one and avoid the other. We are very carefull here to make a short life that we know will quickly be at an end, as Comfortable and Happy as we can; We toil and drudge and contrive all we can to acquire the few good things that belong to it, and to keep off those evils that are uneasie to us; and yet when we have done all, we can never hope to be perfectly Happy here, and our utmost attainment can be only this that we be but less miserable; we rise early and go to bed late, and eat the bread of carefullness rather than suffer want and poverty

ty; and we are at infinite pains and trouble to gain an Eſtate that we muſt quickly leave, and whilſt we have it, we are not more happy, perhaps leſs content than we were before; we are very carefull to keep up our crazy Bodies in good repair, tho' we know they muſt quickly decay and fall into the duſt. A Diſeaſe alarms us, and we are concerned at the warning of death, and are willing to endure almoſt any thing to prevent it, that its a Suffering a greater Martyrdom for this life than ever Chriſtian did for another: but how much greater reaſon have we to be concerned for our future ſtate; that life is never to have any end and ſo we ſhou'd be more carefull about it; it's to continue to Eternity, and what it once is, it's to be ever the ſame; if it be happy, it's ſo unalterably without danger of changing; and if it be miſerable, it's irreverſibly ſo without any hopes of relief. Oh, wonderfull ſtate, how is this life a ſhadow, a dream, a vapour, a bubble, a vaniſhing Nothing in reſpect of the other! it deſerves not a thought, nor is it worth a thouſandth part of that care the other is; how fooliſh are we then to labour ſo much for a moment of our being, and not be more concerned for an endleſs duration of it? But the greatneſs of the thing is as conſiderable as the continu-

nuance; the things we are saved from are the greatest and terriblest evils we can possibly suffer, the utmost torments of Mind and Body, despair and horror, and a dreadfull sense of Divine Anger and Vengeance, and all the terrible apprehensions that guilt within and punishment without can bring upon a Soul that can have nothing else to fly to; and that must suffer greater torment day and night without intermission, than we can have now any conception of. Fire and Brimstone and Chains of darkness, and a never dying worm, are but lesser representations of the unspeakable misery in the other World; and who is it that dreads a nights pain under a tormenting despair, that knows the torments of a troubled mind, or has but tasted the gall and bitterness of a Melancholick humour, who would not be infinitely concern'd, how he may be sav'd from what we mean by Hell and Damnation? and what would not the hopes of Heaven, when they are joyned with those fears, make us farther do, when the one is to fright us from the greatest evil and the most perfect misery, and the other at the same time holds out and invites us to the greatest Happiness, to endless Pleasures, and Joy unspeakable? Who that does not either secretly dis-believe, or never consider of this, would not think

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it the greateſt Queſtion in the World, *what ſhall I do to be ſaved?* And who would not do all he can, and uſe all means that are in his power to this purpoſe? Who would refuſe any pains or labour to accompliſh this great End? Who would ſtick at any difficulty that he was able to overcome and ſurmount to gain this point, this greateſt point of his own eternal Salvation? Had God required us to have toiled all our lives in the moſt wearſom drudgery, and to have ſpent all our days in the hardeſt ſlavery; had he made Religion the greateſt burden and uneaſineſs in the World, in order to the attaining of this, yet what Wiſe man would not have thought it worth his while to have endured it, and gone through it? Had he commanded us to deny every Appetite, to have offered violence to every inclination, to have ſtifl'd every natural deſires and renounced all the Gratifications and Enjoyments of the Animal life; had he obliged us to quit all the comforts of this World, and to have retir'd into a barren Wilderneſs, or a Melancholick Cloiſter, and there have worn out our lives in the ſevereſt Exerciſes of Faſting and Mortification, or to have made them one continued ſtation, one conſtant courſe of Penance and Devotion; all this would have been much more tolerable than

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to have endured the far greater Evils and Miſeries of another World, tho but for a little time, and for much leſs than half ſo long as this life, and therefore a thouſand times more ſo, than to ſuffer a miſerable Eternity. What ſhall we think then of God's requiring no ſuch hard things at our hands, nothing but what is far leſs than any of thoſe, nothing that is extreamly hard or mighty difficult, or very burdenſome and uneaſie to us, nothing but what is truly comfortable and delightfull if we rightly underſtood it, and what tends to our preſent Good, Eaſe and Comfort, Intereſt and Advantage, even in this life as well as another? God puts no ſuch hard conditions upon us as thoſe I mention'd, but we may be ſaved hereafter, and yet enjoy at preſent all the comforts and good things of this World, that a Wiſe Man would deſire; Religion debars us of none of them, ſo far as they are Innocent and Lawfull, that is, ſo far as they are not Evil and Miſchievous to us, and plainly Deſtructive both of our own good and the good of the World. There is no natural good forbidden to us, nor any inclination to be denied any farther than it is fooliſh and unreaſonable and exceeds the bounds of Wiſdom and Virtue; nor has God reſtrained us from any thing but what like the forbidden fruit is poyſonous

ſonous as well as pleaſant, and it's not the pleaſantneſs but the poyſon is the true reaſon why it is forbidden: ſo that our future Happineſs is very conſiſtent with our preſent, and true Godlineſs may inherit the promiſes of this life, as well as of another, as the Scriptures aſſure us, 1 *Tim.* 4. 8. It is not neceſſary to part with our preſent Happineſs, in order to the purchaſing the Reverſion of that in Heven, tho' if it were it would be great gain and advantage to us; there is but one inſtance in Religion wherein this is to be done, and that is in ſuffering perſecution for Chriſt's ſake and the Goſpels, in quitting all our Worldly Intereſts for the ſake of Conſcience and Religion, and rather endure any evils here, than to renounce Chriſt or any true part of Chriſtianity: this indeed is bearing the Croſs, and is the only hard part of Religion, for which there ſhall be an abundant recompenſe hereafter; and the hopes and expectations of that with the preſent Comfort and Satisfaction of Mind, takes off from the burden and uneaſineſs of it; and tho' without hopes of another life, Chriſtians might be of all Men moſt miſerable in this, when they fall under thoſe Circumſtances, as the Apoſtle ſays, 1 *Cor.* 15. 19. yet with thoſe hopes they are far from being ſo, but with exception to that par-

particular caſe which does not often happen. Religion at the ſame time ſecures to us the greateſt Happineſs of this life as well as another, and without loſing any one Comfort or true Enjoyment of this World, we may make ſure of the next. We may therefore put that queſtion to our ſelves, which is ſomething like to that which *Naaman*'s Servants put to him 2 *Kings* 5. 13. Had God bid us do ſome great thing that we might be ſaved, would we not have done it? how much rather then when he bids us do nothing elſe in order to this, but what is very reaſonable and what tends to our Good here, as well as our Salvation hereafter; We muſt be therefore very bad judges of our own intereſt, and very little underſtand that, and ſo be very regardleſs of our ſelves, as well as very ungratefull to the great God, if we do not comply with whatever he has Wiſely and Graciouſly appointed us in order to our Salvation. What that is, I ſhall now briefly conſider, and ſo give the true reſolution to this queſtion, *What ſhall I do to be ſaved*? And it is not very hard to reſolve it, God has not made it any difficult or abſtruſe thing to underſtand, but the meaneſt Chriſtian may eaſily comprehend it; it's not a Secret reſerved only for the Wiſe and Learned, but the pooreſt Soul

if it be but ſincere and honeſt, may come to the true knowledge of it, and there is hardly any without it, tho' it may lie leſs clear and diſtinct in their thoughts; Natural light teaches all men that ſuch and ſuch Actions are diſpleaſing to God, and that thoſe who commit them ſhall be puniſhed hereafter. There is no Man who is guilty of any great wickedneſs but he finds ſome inward apprehenſions of this in his own Mind, and his own Conſcience directs him in great meaſure what he muſt do to be ſaved; but Revelation has made this ſo plain and evident, that a Man muſt uſe great Art to deceive himſelf, if he ever miſtake it; to believe the Goſpel and live according to it, is ſo plain a path-way to Heaven, that there is no Chriſtian but muſt ſee it: and if he thinks of any other, he cannot but know that he cheats himſelf, and wilfully puts a trick upon his own Soul. St. *Paul* here told the Jailor, *That he muſt believe on the Lord Jeſus Chriſt, and he ſhould be ſaved, v.* 31. but this belief which is made the condition and means of Salvation muſt include all that which is conſequent and ought to follow from ſuch a belief; all that Obedience to the Laws of Chriſt, and that Repentance for paſt Sins, and Newneſs and Holineſs of life, which is made as plain and indiſpenſible a condition of Salvation as

Faith

Faith it ſelf; and therefore St. *Peter* in anſwer to the ſame queſtion to thoſe who were greatly concern'd and prick'd in heart, and ſaid, *Men and Brethren what ſhall we do? Acts.* 2. 37. anſwered, *Repent and be Baptized every one of you in the name of Chriſt for the remiſſion of ſins.* Believing and embracing Chriſtianity, was the only way for a *Jew* or a *Heathen* to be ſaved, and to have remiſſion of Sins; and when St. *Peter* bids them Repent, and St. *Paul* bids them Believe, they mean the ſame thing: Faith is the firſt great Principle and Foundation of Repentance and all Chriſtian Vertues; and therefore as including and containing all thoſe it is made the condition of our being ſaved by a Metonymy, whereby the cauſe comprehends alſo the effect. Faith in Scripture is not taken only for an aſſent to another's Words, or a truſt in them; but it denotes a principle that worketh by love, and is manifeſt by good works, without which the Scripture expreſly ſays it is dead; and then it muſt be a ſtrange miſtake to make a bare faith the condition of our Juſtification and Salvation.

It is to be obſerved, and I think it may be a little uſefull, to clear that matter; that when Faith and Believing is made the only condition of being ſaved, and nothing elſe is mention'd, this is

always ſpoken to thoſe who were not yet Chriſtians or Believers, as when Chriſt ſays, *John* 3. 15. *Whoſoever believeth on the Son of Man, ſhall not periſh but have everlaſting Life*: This is ſpoken to *Nicodemus*, who then expreſt his diſ-belief of Chriſt's words, and was not brought fully to believe in him, tho' he was diſpoſed for it? So *John* 6. 40. when Chriſt ſaith, *This is the will of him that ſent me, that every one which ſeeth the Son and believeth on him, may have everlaſting Life*: This is ſpoken to the *Jews*, who murmured at Chriſt, and were far from believing in him: and ſo Chriſt bid the Apoſtles preach this to the unbelieving World, *Whoſoever believeth and is baptized ſhall be ſaved*, Mark 16. 16. *i.e.* Believing and Profeſſing Chriſtianity puts them into a ſalvable ſtate, and if they live according to this faith, they ſhall certainly be ſaved; as if we ſhould ſay to a perſon who deſires to know how he may be a Scholar, Go to School or to the Univerſity; this would put him into a certain way to Learning: but he muſt not only be entred and enrolled there, but he muſt ſtudy and read, and do ſuch things as belong to a Scholar. When St. *Peter* bid the *Jews*, and St. *Paul* the Jailor to believe, and they ſhould be ſaved, they were ſuch as yet had not embrac'd Chriſtianity; and Faith was the only

only means to bring them to that, and ſo put them into a ſalvable ſtate, which ordinarily they cou'd not be in without it: but then they muſt do all thoſe other things which belong to Chriſtians after they are brought to believe, or elſe they wou'd loſe and forfeit this their good ſtate; and therefore when Chriſt ſpeaks to his Diſciples who already believ'd in him, and St. *Paul* writes to thoſe who were already Chriſtians or Believers, they then tell them not only of Faith which is the firſt Chriſtian Vertue and the root of all the reſt, but of Obedience and all good works, of living as becometh the Goſpel, and of adorning their profeſſion with all manner of Vertues, which they make as neceſſary to Salvation as Faith it ſelf. *Thus if ye keep my Commandments* ſaith Chriſt, *ye ſhall abide in my love*, John 15. 10. and *Ye are my Friends, if ye do whatſoever I command you*, v. 14. and *Not every one that ſaith unto me, Lord, Lord*, or that meerly believeth in me, *ſhall enter into the Kingdom of Heaven, but he that does the will of my Father which is in Heaven*, Mat. 7. 21. So ſaid St. *Paul* to the *Corinthians Circumciſion is nothing, nor Uncircumciſion, but the keeping the Commandments of God*, 1 Cor. 7. 19. and to the *Galatians, in Chriſt Jeſus*, i. e. in the Chriſtian Religion, *neither Circumciſion availeth any thing, nor Uncir-*

cumciſion but a new Creature, chap. 6. v. 15. that is, a new temper of mind and habit of Life, for by the Goſpel *the Wrath of God is revealed from Heaven againſt all ungodlineſs and unrighteouſneſs of Men, who hold the truth in unrighteouſneſs,* Romans 1. 19. and, *when the Lord Jeſus ſhall be revealed from Heaven with his mighty Angels, he will take Vengeance on all them that obey not his Goſpel, who ſhall be puniſhed with everlaſting Deſtruction from the preſence of the Lord,* 2. Theſſ. 1. 8, 9. and thoſe Chriſtians who do any ſuch works of the Fleſh as are mentioned, *Gal.* 5. 19, 21. ſhall not inherit the Kingdom of God, but *for the ſake of thoſe the Wrath of God cometh on the Children of diſobedience,* Coloſ. 3. 6. tho' they do believe in Chriſt and have made profeſſion of his Religion. It is therefore as requiſite for ſuch to live according to all the Laws of the Goſpel, as it was at firſt, to believe in Chriſt that they may be ſaved: What a Chriſtian therefore who already believes in Chriſt and owns his Religion to be true, and what we who all do this, ſhould further do to be ſaved, and to make ſure of Heaven, I ſhall in one general Advice direct to, and that is this, That we never allow our ſelves to live in any one known ſin; that we never willfully violate any Law of

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the Goſpel, not ſuffer our ſelves in the Cuſtom of any thing that we know is unlawfull; he that does that is in a dangerous and deſperate condition, and is uncapable of being ſaved by the Terms of the Goſpel: for tho' that allows pardon for every ſin we repent of, yet it allows none to any one of thoſe we do not repent of, but live in; and therefore as we value our Salvation, let no darling Sin, nor beloved Luſt, nor any the moſt profitable or pleaſing Wickedneſs whatſoever, be indulged or continued in by us; it's as much as our Souls are worth if we do, for every willfull habit of ſin does moſt certainly exclude and ſhut us out of the Kingdom of Heaven, without timely Repentance and Amendment; if we have therefore been ever guilty of any ſuch, and ſo have forfeited Heaven and our own Souls, and made our ſelves liable to Eternal Wrath and Damnation; let us endeavour with all ſpeed to recover our ſelves out of that ſad ſtate, and to ſnatch our Souls out of the Jaws of Hell, and from the very brink of perdition; and let us bleſs God that he affords us both time and means and power to do this; and when we have Emerged out of that wretched Condition, let us not throw our ſelves into it again by any new Sins, but let us ever after avoid that rock where we were

like to have ſplit; and let us ſpend all the remainder of our lives in perfecting our Repentance, and in bringing forth fruits worthy of it, and in a conſtant and unbroken, and uninterrupted obedience to all the Laws of Chriſtianity; ſo ſhall we approve our ſelves to God and our own Conſciences; ſo ſhall we have good grounds of Peace and Comfort while we live, and ſo ſhall we be certainly ſaved when we come to die; which God of his infinite mercy grant unto us.

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The Seventh Sermon.

JOB XXVIII. 28.

And unto Man he ſaid, Behold the fear of the Lord that is Wiſdom, and to depart from evil is Underſtanding.

THE Fear of the Lord is a phraſe often uſed in Scripture, to expreſs all Religion by, and 'tis indeed the true Principle and Foundation of it; for whoever has an awfull ſenſe and belief of a Being above him, and a juſt dread of his Almighty Power upon his Mind, will take care to avoid all thoſe things, that he knows are diſpleaſing to him, and to perform all thoſe duties which ſhall procure his favour, and be acceptable

table to him; for all our Happineſs depends upon his Pleaſure, and he can make us miſerable when we anger and provoke him.

Every one, tho' he may have loſt the ſenſe of love, either of God or Religion, and the deſire of Spiritual and Heavenly Happineſs, and may be ſunk into ſuch a ſtate as to have no great reliſh of thoſe things; yet may have the ſenſe of fear ſtrong upon him, and may be greatly affected with what he thinks may deſtroy and ruin and make him miſerable: and therefore fear is the ſtrongeſt and moſt powerfull paſſion, and the moſt deeply rooted in humane nature, for it ariſes from a Natural love of our ſelves and a care and deſire of our own ſelf-preſervation; and every Man has this in him, tho' he has no higher or nobler principles of Vertue and Religion; and therefore 'tis the Character of the moſt deplorably wretched and wicked Creatures, *that they have no fear of God before their Eyes*, Pſ. 36. 1.

Sometimes the love of God, ſometimes the fear of God, ſometimes the knowledge of God, the belief of God is made to expreſs the whole of Religion, and the ſum of our duty; becauſe where one of theſe is, there are all the reſt in ſome degree or other, and they cannot be ſepa-

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rated or divided: for he that believes a God, and knows him to be as he is, a Being of infinite Power and of infinite Goodneſs, muſt fear him and love him too; his power makes him an object of fear, and keeps us from offending him; and his Goodneſs makes him an object of love; and ſo both thoſe do the ſame thing, and as different cauſes yet concur to the ſame effect; and all Vertue and Religion is produced by them, and owes its being and original to them: for without reſpect to God there can be no ſuch thing as Vertue and Religion, and where there is a true fear of him, there they will always be as neceſſarily conjoin'd as effects are to their cauſes, and therefore by an uſual Metonymy the one is put for the other. And this Vertue and Religion which is thus founded in the fear of God, is the greateſt and trueſt Wiſdom in the World; he is the Wiſeſt man who is the moſt Vertuous and Religious; and he is the greateſt Fool who lives Vitiouſly and Irreligiouſly, and without the fear of God; *the fear of the Lord is the beginning of Wiſdom*, or the firſt and chief Wiſdom, and the Foundation of all other; *a good underſtanding have all they that do his Commands*, i. e. they are the truly wiſe Men who live Vertuouſly and Religiouſly, and they Fools who live Vitiouſly and Wickedly;

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Behold the fear of the Lord, that is Wisdom, and to depart from evil is Understanding.

There is no greater blemish, contempt, or imputation upon any Man, than that he is a Fool, and that he acts as such in whatever he does; for it supposes the utmost decay and depravation of his Nature, the loss of his Reason, and that he wants that which makes us to be Men, and is the proper perfection of our Being, which is Wisdom and Understanding. It will therefore greatly recommend, and be for the honour of Religion, if that appears to be the greatest and only Wisdom; and it will justly reproach and expose Vice and Wickedness, if that be made out to be nothing else but folly in the highest degree; which I shall therefore endeavour at this time.

1. First then Religion proposes and attains and secures the greatest End, the chief Good and utmost Happiness that we can desire or are capable of; and this is the truest part of Wisdom, whereas Vice has but low and mean Ends, such as are below the excellency of our Nature, and are so far from promoting our Happiness, that they defeat and destroy it: all beings indeed aim at their own Happiness, and have a blind and general design to compass and attain it; self-preservation

ration is a principle lies at the root of our Beings, and we cannot chuſe open and bare-fac'd miſery; but Vice and Wickedneſs takes down the poyſon that is a little Guilded over, and ſwallows the fatal hook that is baited with an appearing pleaſure or profit, and Men are led away in the dark, and deluded with a ſhadow till they are brought into the deepeſt miſery; Vice propoſes either bodily and ſenſual pleaſure, or worldly gain, or ſome ſuch preſent End and Deſign to be its greateſt Happineſs; but alas, it often loſes thoſe, and Vertue and Religion picks up what the other drops, and lets go; and ſecures thoſe by ends a thouſand times better than Vice does, whilſt it looks yet further, and ſtill aims at greater ends, and a more true and compleat Happineſs than any of thoſe can yield to it; for what is the moſt guſtfull and luſcious ſenſuality of body to an unquiet and uneaſie and diſturbed Mind? Is not that worm of Conſcience, that gnaws it within, and is bred from the filth and putrefaction of its own ſins, a greater torment than all the pleaſures of ſenſe can make amends for? And what could a Man hope for if by his wickedneſs he could gain the whole world, which yet many have even loſt by it, if thereby he loſes his Soul, the peace and quiet of it here, and its Eternal felicity here-

hereafter? All the ends we can aim at and all the objects we can wish and desire, are very little and inconsiderable without Religion, and such are all the things and enjoyments of this World; but Religion has great and noble aims and designs, to make our Minds as well as our Bodies pleased and easie, and to give a pleasure and satisfaction infinitely above the highest bodily delights, which the Brutes are capable of as well as we; to perfect and improve and fit our Souls for the greatest pleasure and happiness here, and for that which is endless and unspeakable hereafter; and to see this more particularly, let us consider,

2. Secondly, that all Ends and Designs but those of Religion, are confined only to this World, whereas those of Religion reach beyond this to a never ending Eternity; how little and short and narrow are all the poor designs we can have here, when in the compass of a few years, they all cease and perish and come to an end; when but a small time hence they shall be as useless and insignificant as if we had never been, or never had any of them. Death, which we all expect, and which will certainly come in a little time, whether we expect it or no, puts a speedy end and conclusion to all other projects and designs but those of Vir-

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tue and Religion; it covers all worldly pomp and Grandeur with a cloud of night and darkneſs, and draws a ſable mantle over all it's glittering and ſhining vanity; its honours lie here buried in the duſt, it's riches take leave of it at the Grave, and all its bodily pleaſures are exchanged for ſtench and noyſomneſs, and its greateſt ſtrength and beauty is turned into weakneſs and gaſtlineſs. This mortifying conſideration ſhould, one would think, make this World, and every thing in it be very contemptible, and all ends and deſigns but thoſe of Virtue and Religion, which reach beyond this World, to be very poor and little, and inconſiderable; for like a Dream, they are all quickly paſt and gone; and when we awake into another World, into a better and more ſubſtantial life, all theſe images and ſhadows and fancies of happineſs will then vaniſh and diſappear, and we ſhall be no more affected with them than with a laſt nights dream, or the paſt viſions of ſlumber and imagination; but then Religion and Vertue will ſtand us in ſtead, then they, and a good Conſcience will ſtick by us, and attend and bear us Company into the other World; and there we ſhall meet with thoſe Ends and Deſigns which Religion has propoſed to us, and our greateſt hopes and wiſhes ſhall be turned into greater fruition and enjoy-

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ment; then a long Eternity ſhall reward and recompenſe our ſhort Labours here, and we ſhall never loſe or be depriv'd of that great End and compleat Happineſs which Religion recommended and direct-ed us to. Vice with all its delights is but for a very little time, and the pleaſures of ſin are enjoy'd but for a Seaſon, *Heb.* 11. 25. Men not only loſe thoſe, and be for ever depriv'd of the End it aimed at, but ſhall receive its ſad and miſerable portion laid up for it, and be eternally tormented with unexpreſſible miſery; And what extream Folly will it then be found to have purſued no other End, nor aim-ed at no other Happineſs but that of this World, which is ſo ſoon gone and at an end, and for the ſake of that to have ex-poſed it ſelf to a miſery that ſhall ne-ver have end; to have preferr'd a preſent moment before an endleſs Eternity, and to gain ſome poor and little Ends here, which yet are often loſt rather than at-tain'd by Mens Vices, to loſe Heaven and everlaſting Happineſs.

3. Religion and Virtue ſecure the Com-fort and Happineſs of this life as well as of another, much better than Vice and Ir-religion; ſo that here is the extream fol-ly of Wickedneſs, that whilſt its deſigns are confined to this World, and it aims at the preſent pleaſures and enjoyments,

and

and good things of this life, it loſes even thoſe, and miſſes of that preſent Comfort and Happineſs, which is a thouſand times more likely to be met with in the ways of Virtue and Religion, than in a life of Vice and Wickedneſs: for as the one deprives us of no real pleaſure or proper enjoyment fit for a wiſe Man, but rather ſweetens them and enhances their reliſh by keeping them Pure and Innocent, and free from the filth and bitterneſs that Vice mixes with them; ſo wickedneſs brings a great many evils and miſchiefs upon it ſelf here, and moſt Mens Vices make them miſerable in this life, as well as in another. *Godlineſs*, ſays Saint *Paul*, *is profitable unto all things, having the promiſe of the life that now is, and of that which is to come*, 1 Tim. 4. 8. and it was the wiſe Mans obſervation long before, that the moſt deſirable bleſſings of this life belong to Wiſdom and Religion, *Length of days is in her right hand, and in her left hand riches and honour*, Prov. 3. 16. whereas nothing does more generally ſhorten Men's days than Vice and Debauchery, and though thoſe Men value nothing ſo much as life, yet they prodigally ſquander it away, and ſpend it too faſt and conſume it upon their Luſt and their Lewdneſs; and theſe make ſhipwrack of their Eſtates as well as of their Conſciences,

and bring Poverty and Beggery very often along with them, ſo that the ruined Fortunes of moſt Men are owing to their vitious and ill Courſes, and they are undone by their Vices here, as well as hereafter; an indelible Character of ſhame and reproach is hereby fixed to their Name and Memory, which ſtains and blemiſhes their Repute and Credit among Men, and their mind reproaches and ſmites them from within, and they feel moſt of the outward and inward evils which are the moſt grievous and uneaſie to us in this life. So that beſides the miſery in Reverſion, which is due to them and unavoidable, there is a preſent one which they ſeldom eſcape, but generally befalls them; ſo fooliſh are they whoſe fondneſs to their Sins makes them hug and embrace them, though they at the ſame time Wound and Poyſon them; ſo infatuated are they, and almoſt faſcinated by them, that they ſtick to them, though to their manifeſt ruin and againſt their plaineſt intereſt, and make themſelves ſuch Martyrs and Confeſſors to their Vices, that as they wear their ſcars always about them, ſo they will endure any thing for their ſakes, and make their way to Hell, through the greateſt ſufferings and evils that their ſins bring upon them here.

4. Re-

4. Religion is the trueſt Wiſdom, as it beſt provides againſt all the Accidents and Contingencies of this uncertain world and againſt all the infirmities of our preſent ſtate and nature. A good man may not be ſecure here that he ſhall not come into the ſame misfortune, and be plagued like other Men, either with ſome Affliction, or Sickneſs, or other common Calamity, which the greateſt Vertue and Religion may be no protection againſt; but the ſame chance may happen both to the Sinner and to the Righteous, and without reſpect either to their Vice or to their Virtue; a Diſeaſe or a Misfortune, a Loſs or a Trouble may come upon either of them, which nothing can keep off or prevent, in this uncertain ſtate; but here Religion gives us the beſt relief, and ſtands us in the greateſt ſtead, and is the moſt uſefull to us; it takes care, as we may ſay, of the main chance, and makes the beſt proviſion for whatever may or can befall us; it ſupports and revives our drooping Spirits, under any afflictions of this world with the cheering thoughts of a Heaven above us, and a Providence over us, and the gladſom reflections of a good Conſcience within us, and a Comfortable truſt in a good God without us; whereas when any of the troubles and misfortunes of life fall on a wicked Man, he has nothing to

keep up his mind under them, but they ſink and cruſh him into the utmoſt deſpair and diſconſolateneſs, and he has no whither to fly for eaſe and comfort; ſad and miſerable muſt be his caſe, who, when his body is ſick and uneaſie, has his mind ſo too, and feels as much anguiſh and anxiety in the one, as he does pain in the other; when his body is under the ſtrugglings and agonies of death, has his Mind and Conſcience under greater; and when he ſees death come up behind him, ſees Hell open before him, as ready to devour and ſwallow him up. Tho' nothing can ſecure us againſt one of theſe, yet Religion does againſt the other, which is ten times the greateſt; and ſo in all other the unavoidable accidents and misfortunes of this worldly ſtate, Religion does wiſely prepare and provide againſt them, and make the beſt defence and ſecurity for us againſt all the dangers that may in this hazardous world come upon us; and without this a man lies always open to every uncertain accident, and ſhall be miſerable at every turn of Fortune, and ſhall have no Happineſs but what ſhall be at the will and pleaſure of outward Contingencies; and ſhall have no foundation or root of Happineſs within himſelf, which nothing but Religion and Vertue can ever give him.

5. Re-

5. Religion makes us wiſe for our ſelves and for things of the greateſt importance and concern to us; makes us wiſe unto Salvation, which is the only true Wiſdom, that deſerves ſo to be called or accounted: for 'tis a Wiſdom falſely ſo called, and no other than great folly to be wiſe about all other things, wiſe in our Notions and Apprehenſions and Judgments of things, wiſe in the Managery and Conduct of all our outward Affairs, wiſe in ſearching the policies and fathoming the moſt cunning Intrigues, wiſe in the greateſt Myſteries of Knowledge and reſearches of Learning, ſo that both our ſelves and others applaud us for our great Wiſdom; and yet be a Fool, in what is more valuable and more concerning to us a thouſand times, which is the everlaſting Salvation of our immortal Souls. He that is not ſo wiſe as to take care of that, is with all his other Wiſdom the worſt of Fools and Mad Men; and more void of common Prudence and Diſcretion, than he that while he pretends to underſtand the great ſecret of being Rich and turning all into Gold, yet is Poor and a Beggar; or like him in a Frenzy, who thought himſelf an Emperor, and to have the greateſt Territories and Dominions, when he had only a Chain and a little Straw; or, him who while he was viewing the Stars,

and obſerving the Heavens above him, did not mind his way, but fell into a Pit.

6. I ſhall ſhow the Wiſdom of Religion from the two cauſes of ſin and wickedneſs, which are only two ſorts of folly and weakneſs of mind.

The firſt is heedleſneſs, raſhneſs, and inconſideration; the other is infidelity and ignorance, or inapprehenſiveneſs of the truth of things. All Irreligion is owing to theſe two Cauſes; for either Men do not mind and conſider as they ought to do, thoſe principles of Religion, which they own and believe, as that there is a Heaven and a Hell, and an Eternal ſtate of Bliſs and Miſery after this Life, ſo as to let theſe have that full force and influence which they ought to have upon their minds; or elſe they do not really believe and apprehend thoſe to be true: which are both high degrees of Folly and proceed from a great defect of Underſtanding and want of Wiſdom.

As to the firſt of theſe, what can be a groſſer folly, than to act contrary to thoſe principles which we own and allow? to believe that there is a God, and that the Soul is immortal, and yet to live as if there were no God, and as if there were no other Life but this? This is certainly the moſt deſperate folly and madneſs to run upon the greateſt danger that we

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ſee evidently before us, and to leap into Hell with our eyes open; when Men do really believe they ſhall be damn'd for a wicked and ill life, and yet ſtill continue in their ſins. 'Tis folly one would think, even to the height of diſtraction to live thus contrary to their belief and let their principles and their actions thus diſagree; and to condemn themſelves in their acting contrary to their own knowledge, belief and underſtanding, in a matter which is of ſo great moment and concern as they muſt acknowledge this to be. Of the two, the other, one would think, were more excuſable who do not believe theſe things, tho' that is great ignorance and folly; for 'tis diſ-believing that which all mankind have in all Ages believed in ſome degree or other, and which we have as much reaſon to believe as we can have, if the thing were never ſo true and certain; and which it is impoſſible we ſhould ever know, or have any reaſon to believe to be falſe; and which if it were only doubtfull and but meerly probable, or indeed poſſible, yet a wiſe Man would not run a great hazard or venture upon it, but would take care to ſave and ſecure himſelf againſt the worſt and utmoſt poſſibilities that might happen: I ſhall not now conſider the great weakneſs and folly of infidelity againſt the cleareſt reaſon and evidence, and the

utmoſt demonſtration the thing is capable of, and requiring more than a thing of that nature can have; nor how Religion is Wiſdom as being eſtabliſhed upon the greateſt foundations of truth and certainty. 'Tis the other folly that of inconſideration by which moſt men periſh, by not attending to the power and force of thoſe truths, which they do believe; but raſhly and inconſiderately following the career of their Luſts and violence of their Inclinations, againſt the reaſon and belief of their Minds, and the conviction of their Judgment and Underſtanding; for could any Man that ſeriouſly conſider'd and believ'd an everlaſting ſtate of rewards and puniſhments, and let his mind duly attend and be affected with thoſe conſiderations, which he really believes to be true; could he be wicked without the greateſt folly and madneſs? and can it appear to be any other than the moſt fooliſh and unreaſonable thing in the World to believe all thoſe great and important things which Religion teaches us, and yet to live as if we believed none of them? This is ſuch unaccountable folly as wants a name, and can have nothing to palliate or excuſe it. Indeed a wicked life is the greateſt folly in the World, and appears to all to be ſo upon reflection and a little ſerious conſideration; no body but repents

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of it afterwards, and is ſorry for it one time or other, tho' perhaps it be too late, and when he cannot retrieve or amend it, unleſs he be ſtupified and hardned and have loſt the uſe of his Judgment and Underſtanding; which is a plain owning it to be Folly and Unadviſedneſs even upon Tryal and Experience, and a wiſhing they had done better, and that they had been much wiſer.

No Man Repents of his having done Vertuouſly and lived Religiouſly, but is pleaſed and ſatisfied in himſelf upon his reflecting upon it; which ſhows that he acted wiſely and prudently: but the direfull agonies and ſad reflections, and horrors, and diſquiets that a Man feels in his mind upon his having liv'd wickedly, ſhows the height of his folly, and how he is forc'd to condemn himſelf for it, and to bewail and lament his extream weakneſs and madneſs, and this is truly Hell; when he muſt do ſo to all Eternity, then I am ſure it will appear, whatever it does now, that Vice and Wickedneſs is the greateſt folly, and that Vertue and Religion are the true and only Wiſdom, and that what the *Pſalmiſt* ſays, is true; *The fear of the Lord is the beginning of Wiſdom.*

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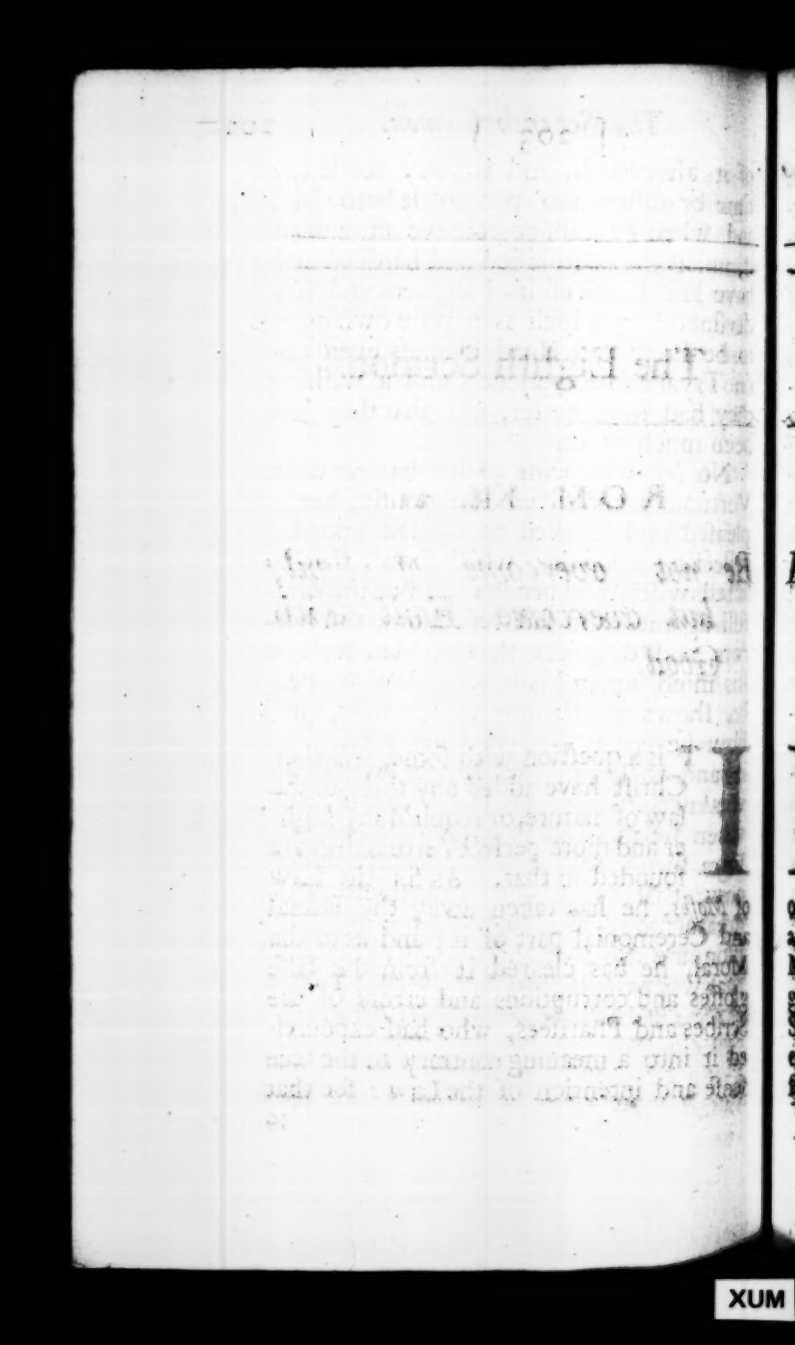

The Eighth Sermon.

ROM. XII. 21.

Be not overcome of Evil, but overcome Evil with Good.

IT is a queſtion with ſome, whether Chriſt have added any thing to the law of nature, or requir'd any higher and more perfect Vertues than are founded in that. As for the Law of *Moſes*, he has taken away the Ritual and Ceremonial part of it; and as to the Moral, he has cleared it from the falſe gloſſes and corruptions and errors of the Scribes and Phariſees, who had expounded it into a meaning contrary to the true ſenſe and intention of the Law: for that

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to be ſure coming from God cou'd have nothing immoral in it, and therefore whatever corrections were made by our Saviour were only of the perverſe and corrupt interpretations of others, and not of the Law it ſelf. But whether he has not added any new and more perfect Laws both to the Law of *Moſes* and that of Nature, and required higher inſtances of Vertue of us Chriſtians, than of the reſt of mankind, is a great queſtion. On the one ſide it ſeems more for the honour of Chriſt and his Religion, in which there are ſome nobler precepts that excell any that are to be met with in any other Moraliſt; as againſt Luſt and Revenge, for loving Enemies, and not retaliating injuries, and the like. On the other ſide, if Chriſt has added any new Laws not founded in nature, they muſt be meerly poſitive and alterable, and not have any natural or intrinſick good in them, but be owing to the mere Arbitrary will of God, and not to the original ſettlement and conſtitution of things; for if they have a foundation either in the nature of God, or the nature of things, they cannot be new, and ſo added to thoſe of nature; but I think this Controverſie may be thus compounded and reſolved, that thoſe Laws, though they were founded in nature and had a natural and intrinſick and eternal Good-

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ness in them, as all moral Vertues have, yet cou'd not be so well known and discovered by the dim-light of nature, nor were so fully promulged by the Law of *Moses*, as they are now by the Gospel or the Christian Revelation. One of the highest and noblest Virtues of Christianity is that advice, precept, or duty given here in my Text, *Be not overcome.* Concerning which, tho' there be no such thing hardly to be found in the Law of *Moses*, and the quite contrary to be often met with in the best Heathen Moralists, who reckon'd Revenging an Injury as a part of Justice, and among the number of their Vertues; yet it's certain, if we consider of it, it is very reasonable, and has a natural and intrinsick Goodness in it, and tends very much to the peace of our minds and the comfort of our lives among the many Evils, Injuries, and ill usages from others we may probably meet with in this World; the best shelter and security against which, and the best and most perfect Vertue a Christian ought to learn, is that of the Text; which tho' it be so much against the practice, and therefore seems to be against the nature of mankind, yet it is not; but is a most excellent duty in it self and what we are always indispensibly bound to, both as wise Men and good Christians: *Be not overcome of evil but*

but overcome evil with good, from which I ſhall firſt ſhow you what it is to be *overcome of evil*: Secondly, the good and excellency of not being overcome of evil, but overcoming evil with good. First, what it is to be overcome of evil, *i. e.* the evil that is done to us by others, not that is done by our ſelves, for that overcomes us whenever we fall into it, but we may ſuffer a great deal of evil or injuries from others, without being overcome by it; for it may be ſaid to overcome us only by theſe ſeveral ways. 1. When it ſo takes away the peace of a Man's mind as to make him ſink under it: now no evil ought to do this, but the evil of ſin and guilt, and the ſad Conſequences of thoſe which are the wrath of God and Eternal Damnation; theſe are ſo dreadfull that nothing can bear or ſtand up againſt them, and therefore they are not to be born but to be avoided, and we ought to take care to eſcape them by Repentance and a good Life, for there is no maſtering and overcoming them; they are ſo great and intolerable that humane nature cannot grapple with them or endure them with any degree of courage or patience. But now all the evils of this World may be bravely withſtood or overcome, and we can rally up power and reſolution ſufficient to contend with them and

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hold out pretty tolerably against them, so as to preserve an inward ease and comfort, peace and tranquility of mind under all, or any of them; and that strength and vigour, and firmness, and constancy of a Man's mind, may not be broke or dissolved by them: and this is true Courage and Bravery, and Greatness of mind, which was most eminently in the first Martyrs and Christians under all their sufferings, wherein they were *more than Conquerors thro' Christ, who strengthened them*, Rom. 8. 37. And many others have bore Sicknesses and Adversity, Reproach and Calumny, and other misfortunes of this World with great evenness and Equanimity and cheerfulness of mind, and have not been sunk or depressed by them; they have not lain down under the burden, but tho' it has been heavy and hard, and they have felt it so, and not been without the sense of it, yet they have born up under it, and with putting forth their strength and patience, made it less than it otherwise would have been, or if they had faln down under it. Ill usage and Injustice from others are not the least of evils, nor the easiest to be born; but when we consider they are no more in our power to prevent than Diseases or any other Accidents that may befall us, the peace of our mind shou'd not be much af-

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affected with them; ſince that ought always to depend upon what is in our own power, and upon our own voluntary choice and actions, or elſe we can never have any ſecurity of it, but it will be at the mercy wholly of every chance or accident without us. And ſecondly, the way not to be overcome by them, is, not to dwell too much upon them in our thoughts, nor to chew or ruminate upon them, nor keep them in our thoughts too morоſely, for that is to roll the bitterneſs of them, as it were up and down in our mouths and to taſte them over again; whereas to ſpit them out, to paſs them by, to neglect them, and not think of them, is the ſpeedieſt way to have done with them: if they lie heating and boyling upon our ſtomachs and the Cholerick and Revengefull humour be fermented and put in agitation by them, it will greatly trouble and annoy us; but when we check and ſuppreſs it at firſt, we are at eaſe preſently, and have none of thoſe tumultuous and diſorderly diſturbances that are in the breaſts of Revengefull and Malitious Men, that can never forget or paſs by an injury, but let it like a thorn in the fleſh alway pain them, and go in further and deeper, and cauſe an Ulcer that ſhall throb and burn within, and be very troubleſome; whereas all might have been cured by

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plucking it out presently and throwing it away, and not letting it stick long or enter deep into our thoughts. 3. Not to have any thoughts of Revenging it is the best way to overcome it; for this lessens the trouble of it, and puts a quick and speedy end to it, whereas the other puts a Man upon a thousand uneasie thoughts and contrivances, sets his head upon working like the Devil how to do mischief, and like him is all the while tormented with his own mischievous designs, whether they succeed or not; and is always restless and uneasie least they should fail and he should be disappointed: and if he is not, yet he procures no manner of good to himself, but only mischief to another, which is all the Diabolical pleasure of the most successfull Revenge: and he is certainly overcome by an injury who is thus provoked to return and retaliate it, and will give himself a vast deal of trouble for no manner of good, but meerly to do ill to another; much good may do these Men with the sweets of their Revenge, as they call it; the Devils themselves may be pleased and delighted in the midst of Hell if there be great and true pleasure in this. 4. We are overcome by evil when we are brought to commit the same evil, and do the same thing to others which they did to us; when

we are brought to render railing for railing, curſing for curſing, evil ſpeaking for evil ſpeaking, and the like; *i. e.* when others treat us in this rude manner, and we return them the ſame again, and give them, as we ſay, as good as they bring. Mens Tongues are the moſt ready Inſtruments of their malice, by which they who are otherwiſe never ſo weak and impotent, and like a Serpent, crawling upon their bellies, as malice often does, yet can dart out their ſtings, even bitter words, and with their forked and poiſoned Tongues ſpit abundance of their venom at others which is in themſelves; and ſo plentifully diſgorge that filthy and corrupted matter of their own exulcerated minds. They conſider not that for all theſe evil and idle words (for it was chiefly of thoſe words of Calumny and Slander our Saviour ſpoke) they muſt give account in the day of Judgment, *Mat.* 12. 36. and that they are as anſwerable for ſuch words, tho they paſs away as the wind, as they ſay, as for the more laſting actions; *For by thy words thou ſhalt be juſtified, and by thy words thou ſhalt be condemned*, v. 37. A Man may be damn'd as well for injurious words as injurious actions and they may often do as much miſchief not only to the perſon himſelf, whoſe credit may probably be as dear to him as life, and as great an injuſtice to take it away:

away: And it may do a much greater miſchief to Religion, and hinder all the good, or a great part of it, which a Man might be otherwiſe capable of doing: And all this they are anſwerable for, who are the cauſes of it, and not the Innocent Perſon who is thus uſed. When the *Jews* ſlandered our Saviour, as *a wine bibber* and a drunkard, as *a friend of publicans and ſinners*, as *a deceiver* and impoſtor, and ſo kept others from hearing his Sermons and receiving his Doctrine, they were anſwerable not only for themſelves but for the Souls of others, who thus periſhed by their means; and our Saviour was no way blamable for not doing that good which others hindred, and which he, tho' unſucceſsfully, yet heartily endeavour'd. 5. We are overcome by evil when we are brought by it to neglect any neceſſary duty, or to do any unfit and unlawfull act that otherwiſe we ſhould not have done; as they who will neglect Prayer, or coming to Church, or attending upon God's word, becauſe they are offended with ſome of their Brethren who come there, or with their Miniſter, upon which they will fall out it ſeems with God himſelf too: they who will give nothing in Charity, becauſe they who collect or diſtribute it, agree not with them in all things; and ſo they will revenge

the ſuppoſed injury of another upon thoſe poor wretches who never cou'd be ſuppoſed to do or think them any at all: they who will ſhow ſpite to the publick, and oppoſe the Government, becauſe ſome are in it they do not like or care for; and ſo their hatred to them ſhall make them do all the miſchief they can to the whole, and they will Sacrifice the Peace of the Kingdom to the private piques and animoſities with ſome particular Men. If the little injuries of others drive us to this, we are ſadly overcome by them; they overcome thoſe greater indiſpenſible obligations we ſtand in, which nothing can or ought to reſcind; and they make us do that which otherwiſe the ſenſe of our duty and conviction of our mind wou'd perſwade us not to do, if we were not thus blinded with paſſion and hurried with rage and anger, and had our underſtanding darkned and clouded with thoſe ſtorms of paſſion and reſentment, which ariſe in us. The beſt way to allay thoſe is to check them at firſt, and put out the firſt ſparks of the glowing flame, and not ſuffer it to kindle to any height in our breaſts, but to quench and ſtifle it immediately with wiſe thoughts and ſteady reſolutions, and with a deſigned neglect and paſſing by of the ſuppoſed injury; if we would leſſen that or wholly take

take it away and deſtroy it, if we would overcome the evil of it, the beſt way is by doing good for evil, by returning Offices of kindneſs for thoſe of ill will, of Love for thoſe of Hatred, Friendſhip and Civility for Rudeneſs and Unmannerlineſs, Bleſſing for Curſing, ſpeaking well of others for their ſpeaking evil of us, and *not rendring railing for railing*, nor injury for injury, *but overcoming evil with good*: How excellent a Virtue this is, what advantages and benefits belong to it, I come now to ſhow; nay how neceſſary a Chriſtian duty it is, without the performance of which, in ſuch meaſures as are required of us, we forfeit Salvation and Pardon of our ſins at the hands of God. For no particular Vertue is made ſo much, and ſo expreſly the condition of our Pardon in the Holy Scripture as this; but how hard is it to perſwade our ſelves or others to it, for want of getting a power over the firſt riſings of paſſion, and being able to check the Brutiſh inclinations that belong to us with thought and reaſon; and for want of conſidering the excellency and perfection, nay, the eaſe and pleaſure of it, and the many obligations we have to perform it. As Firſt, It muſt be owned that the quiet of our lives, and the peace of our minds very much depend upon it; for it cannot but

be ſuppoſed that we ſhall ſometimes meet with very ill uſage and treatment from other people; the beſt of men have not been free from it, tho' they no way deſerved it; as our Saviour, one of whoſe ſufferings it is accounted, that he *endured the contradiction of ſinners againſt himſelf*, Hebrews 12. 3. and the Apoſtles, who often complain of unreaſonable and perverſe and wicked Men, 2 *Theſſ.* 3. 2. and the greateſt examples of Virtue before and ſince them, ſuch as *Socrates*, *Cato*, *Seneca*, and the like, have had the ſame meaſure; and it's often the Lot and Portion of the beſt of Men, and that which has made them ſo as much as any thing; and God has ſuffered it for a Tryal and increaſe of their Virtue. Now if a Man muſt be always uneaſie and unhappy, and have a great diſturbance and diſquiet in his mind, when he meets with this, it will not be in the power of God and Religion, nor of Vertue and a good Conſcience to make a man happy, as it certainly is, and to give him eaſe and ſatisfaction in himſelf, however others ſhall uſe and wrong him; if every rude and ill natur'd Perſon, whoſe Tongues are their own, and who will uſe them as they pleaſe without any regard to Truth, Manners, or Religion, ſhall task away a Mans peace and quiet; or their unjuſt and undeſerved

ved uſage ſhall make a breach upon the ſteadineſs and firmneſs of a Man's mind, and he ſhall be diſturbed and unhappy, becauſe others are uncivil, humourſome and ignorant; there will be no ſuch thing as inward peace and quiet, nor will our Saviour's words ſignifie any thing, *My peace I leave with you*, John 14. 27. *In patience poſſeſs ye your Souls*, Luke 21. 19. *Bleſſed are ye when men ſhall ſpeak evil of you and hate and reproach you*, Luke 6. 22. But a Man muſt mind which way the wind ſits or the Weather-cock turns, on which ſide the Birds fly, or which is as uncertain, what is the opinion of unthinking Men to judge of himſelf by. Indeed the opinion of good and wiſe Men who are able to judge, is very much to be minded, and is truly credit, which is to be preſerved next to Conſcience; but he that is not above the little noiſe and the ignorant cenſures, and the brutiſh Clamours, and the petty injuries of others is a very weak, and will be often a very unhappy Man. 2. It's one of the greateſt and moſt pleaſant Virtues to gain a Victory over our own paſſions, and to overcome the brutiſh inclinations of Anger and Revenge, which are apt to riſe in us at firſt upon the ſenſe of an injury. He that can calm and quiet thoſe, and by wiſe thoughts ſubdue the boyſterous rage and furiouſneſs

of an angry ſpirit, is a greater Man and a greater Conqueror than he that Conquers whole Countries and Cities, and fenced Places, and overcomes many thouſands of Enemies by the Sword, as the Wiſe man obſerves, *He that is ſlow to anger is better than the mighty; and he that ruleth his ſpirit, than he that taketh a City*, Prov. 16. 32. This is the true Virtue of a Man that maſters the beaſt, the brutiſh Appetites and Inclinations that are in him; which if he let looſe, they will rage and tear and devour him, and hurry him to revenge and madneſs, and all the diſmal effects of them. Nothing is ſo raſh and inconſiderate, and ſhows ſo much impotency and weakneſs of mind as thoſe paſſions which are apt to riſe up in us; and nothing ſhows greater Wiſdom and more true greatneſs of mind, than to Command and Conquer them, and bear a provocation and forgive it, inſtead of being ſet on fire, and overcome by it; nor can any thing be more pleaſant than to gain this Victory over our paſſions, for they are very troubleſome and uneaſie, and all find them ſo who are under them: but it's the greateſt eaſe and pleaſure of mind and body too, to be free from them, and to be in a calm, and gentle, and meek, and undiſturbed ſtate. Anger and revenge are the moſt uneaſie, and vexatious, and tormenting paſſions that belong

belong to human nature, that fire and inflame the ſpirits, put the blood into an Unnatural and Venemous Ferment, and the whole Man under the gall of bitterneſs and the greateſt uneaſineſs; ſo that his mind can enjoy nothing, but is reſtleſs and tumultuous, and under a thouſand fearfull and vexatious thoughts how to contrive and how to accompliſh it's Miſchievous and Revengfull deſigns upon others. But to lay all theſe aſide, and to paſs by, and forgive an injury, and let our paſſions be quiet without any great reſentment of it, is to be at eaſe within our ſelves, and has more ſweetneſs and comfort in it than all the revenge in the World. 3. As this is overcoming our ſelves, ſo it's overcoming our Enemies too, and the beſt and the leaſt troubleſom, and the moſt generous way of Conquering them; for firſt it diſappoints all their malice and avoids the blow they intended to give us, for this puts by the injury which was thruſt at us; or at leaſt takes off the ſmart, and the ſenſe of it, which is the greateſt evil that they deſigned by it, and they have loſt their deſign if they ſee us not concerned at it. But further, if we can bring our ſelves to return kindneſs for injury, and *overcome evil with good*, this, if any thing, will overcome an Enemy, by making him become

come a Friend, which is the greateſt and perfecteſt Victory in the World; and ſubdue him with ſuch powerfull force and conduct that he cannot but yield to it. *A ſoft anſwer will turn away his wrath,* as the wiſe man ſpeaks, *Prov.* 15. 1. and ſhowing the kind offices of love and kindneſs and civility to him, will not only heap coals of fire upon his head, if he ſtill continue to injure us, but in all probability melt him into kindneſs and goodneſs; for he muſt be a very barbarous wretch, and void of all ſenſe of humanity, beyond the rate of moſt Men, who will not be obliged by a generous kindneſs from an Enemy; and he muſt be a mere Savage, who is not to be wrought upon by civility and good will. Revenging an injury is the way to double and encreaſe it and to keep up the War and Hoſtility, with vaſt trouble and expence; but the other preſently procures a Fair and a Comfortable and an Honourable Peace and Reconciliation. Many think it will draw more injuries upon them if they do not revenge themſelves for thoſe paſt, and make it coſt others dear to hurt them, ſo that it's their Motto, *nemo me impune lacceſſet*: but this for the moſt part fails, and is the worſt and longeſt, and moſt troubleſome way to get rid of them; every Man may indeed preſerve his right

if

if it be valuable and not better to part with it than to loſe it, and yet keep up fully to this temper of doing any good in his power, to thoſe who would do this evil to him: but to return evil for evil, injury for injury is no more the beſt way to overcome it, than it's to heal a wound by cutting it deeper and lancing it wider, when otherwiſe it would quickly cloſe of it ſelf; and love would be like oyl poured in to ſupple and heal it. 4. The overcoming evil with good is ſo like to God, who does good every day to us and all mankind, tho' we injure and provoke him; that our having ſuch uſage from him, ſhould teach and learn us it, and incline us to practiſe it to our Brethren. If God ſhould be preſently enraged and reſolve to revenge himſelf upon us for every injury we offer to Heaven, *i. e.* for every ſin we commit, how ſad and lamentable acaſe muſt we be in; we therefore that live by virtue of this good principle, that owe our lives, and all the mercies we enjoy to this virtue in God, whereby he ſpares us, tho' we provoke him; and is ſlow to anger tho' we ſin againſt him, and revenges not himſelf upon us weak and impotent, and yet bold and daring Enemies: How ſhould we feel the good of it to our ſelves and not practiſe it to others? Did not God deal otherwiſe with

us,

us, than revenge and anger inclines us to deal with others, how might he consume us every moment; and never wait to be gracious, nor let his goodness lead us to repentance, nor never let us enjoy the blessings of his common providence, but shut up the Heavens that they should not rain, and put out the Sun that it should not shine upon such evil and unjust, such sinfull and rebellious Creatures as we are? Nay, had he not been disposed to this Vertue, which is the very perfection and excellence of the Divine Nature, he had not shown so much love and done so much good for sinners, as to send his own Son Christ into the World to die for us, even when we were Enemies to him, and to God that made us. We then that had perished for ever had it not been for this Vertue, how should we love and value it and endeavour to imitate it, and deal with our Brethren as God dealt with us! What an example of this our Saviour has left, appears by his whole life, which was a perpetual suffering of injuries and doing of good; and especially at his death, when he pray'd for his Enemies, and *being reviled he reviled not again*, but *as a sheep led to the slaughter he was dumb, and opened not his mouth*, unless to pray for those who barbarously used and murdered him: and in this he left

left us an example that we ſhould follow his ſteps. But Fifthly and Laſtly, This is not a mere Chriſtian perfection and a Noble Heroical degree of Virtue, which it's matter of advice to attain; but it's a neceſſary Chriſtian duty, without which we ſhall not go to Heaven, nor be capable of Pardon and Salvation at the hands of God. If we revenge the injuries that are done to us, God will not forgive us the ſins we commit againſt him: he has expreſly told us ſo, *Matth.* 6. 15. *Mark* 11. 26. *Luke* 6. 37. and that *with the ſame meaſure we mete to others it ſhall be meaſured to us again*, even by God in another World, who will ſhow himſelf mercifull to thoſe that are mercifull and froward to thoſe who are froward; and to thoſe who are revengefull and inexorable to their Brethren, he will be ſo too, when they ſtand in more need of mercy and forgiveneſs than any of their Brethren can at any time do of them. What are the degrees and meaſures of exerciſing this Virtue, I cannot now exactly ſhow you; but in general, to forgive an injury and not return it by another, to overcome it, not with evil but with good, is ſo much a duty to every Chriſtian, that he ſhall not come to Heaven who does not in ſome meaſure perform it, and who notoriouſly and plainly acts contrary to it.

Let

Let us therefore, for the preſent Peace of our Lives, for the quiet of our Minds and for the everlaſting Peace and Happineſs of our Souls, endeavour to learn this Virtue, and *not be overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good.*

THE

The Ninth Sermon.

LUKE XVI. 31.

And he ſaid unto him, If they hear not Moſes *and the Prophets, neither will they be perſwaded, tho' one roſe from the dead.*

AMongſt all the many Arguments that there are for Religion, and to perſwade men to a good life, there are none ſo ſtrong and ſo forcible if well conſider'd, as thoſe which are drawn from another World, and from a future ſtate of rewards and puniſhments: There are indeed a great many that lie near and ariſe from ſeveral other conſiderations, from

from the tendency of Religion to make us happy in this World; from the miſerable effects that moſt Vices have upon Men's Fortunes and Enjoyments; from the natural and intrinſick Goodneſs and Amiableneſs, that is in Virtue and Religion, whereby it recommends it ſelf to our minds, and the abominable filthineſs and uglineſs that is in Vice, and it's contrariety to right reaſon as well as our true intereſt: by theſe and many other conſiderations Religion is ſtrengthened on every ſide and planted round with ſuch Arguments as are enough to defend it from moſt of the aſſaults that Vice and Wickedneſs can make upon it. But its ſtrongeſt Hold, its main Fort wherein lies its greateſt and impregnable ſtrength, is the thoughts of another World, of a Heaven and a Hell hereafter; this will hold out if all the other ſhould fail, and if Vice ſhould be never ſo Fortunate and Happy, as it ſometimes is in this World; if Wickedneſs ſhould have as many Prizes as Virtue in this Lottery of things that is here below: yet there it would be ſure to be the loſer, and could have no pretences to vye and contend with Religion; there the account between 'em appears manifeſtly and notoriouſly different, without adjuſting it by particulars, and making ſuch abatements as we muſt often in this World,

World. This is a plain and obvious, an univerſal and undoubted, and one would think, an irreſiſtible Argument for Religion, that depends not upon long reaſonings and many obſervations, as ſome others do, but may be eaſily underſtood, and will ſtrongly work upon all mankind; and therefore the Scripture does chiefly make uſe of it, and every where preſſes and ſuggeſts it to us, as the ſtrongeſt ſanction of the Divine Law, and that which is the likelieſt to prevail upon us, when 'tis fully believed and conſidered. The Rich Man here in the Parable, thought there was ſo much ſtrength in it, now that he felt it, that he queſtion'd not, but it would prevail even upon his wicked Brethren, if it were offered with all its advantage to 'em; if one went from the dead and told 'em what he ſuffered, and what they would certainly do, if they took not care in time, not to come into that place of torment: and therefore he ſeems to have picht upon the likelieſt way for this, when he requeſted *Abraham*, that a Meſſenger might be ſent from the dead to 'em; if that might be granted by the Laws and Polity of the other World, there was no doubt ſure but it would attain the effect and bring 'em to Repentance; ſuch a Meſſage as he would ſend 'em, ſuch an

account of things in the other World as he would give them, ſhould ſurely work ſtrangely upon 'em, and make 'em amend their lives. This he made no queſtion of, for had it been his own caſe, were he to have lived again, after he knew ſo much as he did now, he would have been quite another man, and ſo ſhould his Brethren one would think by ſuch a way as this was; but *Abraham* tells him the quite contrary, *If they hear not* Moſes *and the Prophets, neither will they be perſwaded, tho' one riſe from the dead.* This ſeems very ſtrange, and will do much more ſo, when we conſider particularly what Arguments a Meſſenger from the dead would bring along with him, to perſwade a man to Repentance; ſuch as it is impoſſible ſure not to be overcome by them; ſuch as if they will not do, nothing elſe will: I ſhall offer ſome of them to you, and then endeavour to give you an account of what *Abraham* here ſays, *If they hear not* Moſes *and the Prophets, neither will they be perſwaded tho' one roſe from the dead.* And,

Firſt, let us conſider what ſtrong and powerfull Arguments a Meſſenger from the dead would bring along with him to perſwade a wicked man to Repentance; and in the

1. Firſt

1. First place, he would ſatisfie him of the truth and certainty of ſuch a place; that there is really a future ſtate; that there is not an end of us when we go off from this Worldly Stage and Theatre, but that there is another life to ſucceed this, wherein we ſhall receive as we have behaved our ſelves here. That the Soul when it is releas'd from the Body, and puts on a thinner and a lighter Vehicle, paſſes to the vaſt Regions of Eternity, and there has a very different life from what it had here; when naked of all earthy matter, and not wanting any of the Conveniencies of its mortal ſtate, its thoughts are more vigorous and ſprightly, and it underſtands more clearly and wills more freely, and acts more nimbly and expeditely and unreſtrainedly. He could tell us how it feels it ſelf, when it is firſt looſed from the Body, and ſtrip'd naked of its fleſhly Cloathing; whither it will betake it ſelf next, and to what place it is convey'd; what reception it has at its firſt coming into the other World, and how it is provided for, when like a ſtranger it arrives at that unknown place. He would acquaint us how it was brought before the bar of God, and a Divine Judgment immediately paſs'd upon it, and ſo was Sentenc'd to its final ſtate and irreverſible doom, according to

what it had done in the flesh whether it were good or evil; and therefore in the

2. Second place he would acquaint us with the Happy and Blessed state of good Souls there: If he were *Lazarus* as was desired here by the rich man, one that lay in *Abraham*'s Bosom, and tasted of the Joys and Pleasures that are at God's right hand, what a ravishing account would he give us of those things, which *no Eye* upon Earth *hath seen, nor Ear heard, neither hath it enter'd into the heart of any Man* who hath not enjoy'd 'em to concieve what they are. He that had been an Inhabitant of the new *Jerusalem*, the Glorious City and Beautifull Palace of the great God; what a Description would he give of all the Glories of it, of all the Riches and Heavenly Treasures that are there laid up, of all the Crowns that are worn by every Citizen there, of all the mansions that are there for every Soul; of all that blest Society of Angels and glorified Spirits, of all the Orders of Cherubims and Seraphims, and all the Armies of Martyrs; of the Glorious Throne of the Heavenly King, and of the Lamb that sits upon it; of the lustre and brightness that shines in every place, and the Joy and Gladness that dances in every heart, and sparkles in every eye, and appears in every

very face; of the great Comp'acency and Delight that they have in one another, and the moſt inflamed Love and Charity, with which they meet their fellow Saints; how they are infinitely Happy in themſelves, and double all their Happineſs by the ſweet reliſh and taſt they have of that of others as well as their own; how they live all in Raptures and Extaſies of Joy, and have their Souls overflowed with thoſe Rivers of Pleaſure that are at God's right hand, and for ever ſtream from that Spring and Fountain of all good. In a word, that they enjoy ſuch Pleaſures and Delights, that he which felt 'em one moment, would be willing to endure all the Racks and the Tortures of the crueleſt Perſecutors that he might but once taſt of 'em again: That thoſe ſhort afflictions are not worthy to be compared with them; that the greateſt Pleaſures and Delights in this World, are but faint and empty ſhadows and poor reſemblances of 'em; and that he longs to be enjoying 'em again, and that he is impatient to be ſo long abſent from 'em.

3. A Meſſenger from the dead would teſtifie alſo of the Miſery and grievous Torments of Men wicked and ſinfull. *Lazarus* that had ſeen the flames of Hell, tho' afar off, or *Dives* that had felt and

been in the midſt of them, would give a Tragical deſcription of that place of horrors; he would tell us what a Diſmal and Diſconſolate place is that dark Priſon, where they are ſhut up with helliſh Fiends and accurſed Spirits, who affright and inſult over the wretched Soul; how they are there bound hand and foot with chains of darkneſs, not able to move any way for the leaſt eaſe, nor call to any Friend to pity or comfort 'em; how they are always ſinking into a dark and bottomleſs Pit, and lie for ever ſcalding in a Furnace of fire, rowling and ſcorching in a Lake of burning Brimſtone; where the raging flames with unexpreſſible pain enter the tender parts, and pierce through the Soul with their keenneſs and ſharpneſs; how in the extremity of their Torments, the miſerable wretches cry out and roar, and *gnaw their tongues for pain, and blaſpheme the God of Heaven becauſe of their pains*, Revel. 16. 10, 11. How with Rage and Fury againſt themſelves, curſing their own folly and madneſs, and ſwallow'd up with bitter deſpair, the remembrance of their own Guilt ſtings their enraged Conſcience, and the never dying Worm gnaws and eats at their very hearts; and the anger of an Almighty and Incens'd God lies always heavy upon 'em, and his wrath preſſes 'em ſore, and fills their Souls with all the dread-

dreadfull Ideas of fear and deſpondency: and in the midſt of all this anguiſh there is one thing more terrible than all this, than all they feel, and that is the Apprehenſion, that it ſhall laſt for ever, that there ſhall be no end of thoſe Torments that they are not able to bear for one day; This, this is the bittereſt and moſt ſad circumſtance that confounds the wretched tormented Soul, and ſharpens every pain it feels, and fills it with unexpreſſible Horror and Deſpair, that it muſt endure all this to infinite Ages, to a boundleſs and never ending Eternity; and that after it has lain many thouſand years in that place of Torments, it will ſtill have as many to go through as it had at firſt. Oh, ſad and dreadfull ſtate! how grievous and intolerable does it appear to us, and how would one that had been in it repreſent it? How if he had but as much Charity as *Dives*, would he warn us not to come into that place of Torments? how unwilling would he be to go back to it, how loth to end his meſſage, and how deſirous to give us an Eternal account of them, rather than endure 'em?

And now would a wicked Man be able to reſiſt this meſſage? could he ſtand out againſt ſuch Arguments as theſe are? would not theſe cool the heat of his Luſts, and damp all the Jollity of his moſt

tempting Vices? Would not this ſpoil all their Charms and ſully all their enticing Beauty and Gayety? Would not ſuch a Ghoſtly Meſſenger appearing before him make his blood chill, and his joynts tremble, and the heart of the moſt hardy ſinner be afraid at the ſight of him, when he brought the terrible news to his brethren in wickedneſs, from one with whom they had often laugh'd at Religion, and the ſtories of Hell, and another World; with whom they had been often merry and that with thoſe very things that they now hear the truth of, who thought them if not meer Bugbears and Fables, yet things a great way off and at a great diſtance, that they ſhould not much trouble themſelves withall; when now they find all theſe are true, and are put in mind of 'em by ſuch a way as this is, and they ſo nearly concern them, and are like in a little while to be their own Caſe? Surely by all theſe they will be perſwaded and brought to Repentance; I believe there is no ſinner but thinks he himſelf ſhould be perſwaded by theſe means, and if God ſhould uſe ſuch an extraordinary way to convert him, this he queſtions not, but would do it; tho' now he is of another mind, and has no thoughts of leaving his ſins, yet that he thinks would certainly work upon him. He I doubt may

be

be as much miſtaken of himſelf, as *Dives* was of his Brethren, of whom *Abraham*, aſſures him, that *if they heard not* Moſes *and the Prophets, neither would they be perſwaded, tho' one roſe from the dead.* And that I may give you ſome account of the likelihood of this, and of the truth of what *Abraham* here ſays, I ſhall offer you theſe five conſiderations.

1. All the Arguments which a Meſſenger from the dead would bring along with him, and which are indeed ſo ſtrong that when one ſeriouſly conſiders them, one would think it impoſſible to reſiſt them, theſe we have already, and they have been offered to us with their full ſtrength and advantage; we have been made acquainted with the immortality of our Souls, and a future ſtate, with the Joys of Heaven, and the torments of Hell, theſe can be no new diſcoveries to us, that we never heard of before.

God in the Scripture had laid open the other World before us, and ſhown us the two vaſt and different parts of it; he had given a general notice of this to all Men by the light of Nature, by that they could diſcern that there was another Country that lay off from this; another ſtate after this life, wherein good men would be happy and wicked men miſerable. This was known to all the old

old unskillfull World, before ever there was any Revelation, any *pixis nautica*, or any ſuch Map or Chart, as we have now of the other World: they had not only a kind of gueſs or probable conjecture of it, like *Columbus* of *America*, but ſomething more that made it a received Article of the Heathen Religion; but this is made plainer to us by the Scriptures and Goſpel Revelation, by which *Life and Immortality is brought* more clearly *to light*; ſo that all thoſe Arguments are ſet before us, and that with the ſame ſtrength and advantage that they could have been by a Meſſenger from the dead; He could bring us no more, nor any new ones, but only what we have already; God has informed us of what belongs to another World, ſo far as it is of any concern to us, and ſo much as is ſufficient to make us take care about it; we cannot have better and fairer warning about thoſe things, and we can have no ſtronger or more powerful Arguments than we have already.

2. We have ſo much reaſon to believe the truth of thoſe things, that they who will not be ſatisfied with that, neither would they be perſwaded tho' they had a particular Meſſenger to certifie 'em about them; we have a Divine Revelation added to natural light, and the univerſal

ſal ſuffrage of mankind; we have had a number of Miracles and extraordinary Effects of Divine power, to aſſure us of the truth of that Religion, that delivers us the belief of thoſe things: We have had many Prophets ſent from God, and with ſufficient Credentials to ſatisfie us that they were ſo, to Preach theſe things to us: We have had one come from Heaven, and after he was dead, riſe again, and ſo become even a Meſſenger from the dead to us, and teſtifi'd all theſe things to be true. And if we will be ſuch Scepticks as ſtill to entertain doubts and diſbelieve all theſe, we ſhould be the ſame I fear, tho' we had one come from the dead to us; we ſhould be apt to think it but a Spectre, a meer Image of Air or of Fancy, a Melancholy Mormo, or a waking Dream, and be inclined to think that we were impos'd upon by our own active Imaginations, and the many reports and ſtories we have heard of ſuch things running in our minds; he that can diſbelieve all the undoubted Arguments for the truth of Scripture, and reveal'd Religion may run ſo far into Scepticiſm, as to diſ-believe his ſenſes, and to think every thing that appears to him to be fantaſtick and imaginary.

3. If

3. If he did believe it at that time, and were never ſo much ſtartled and affrighted at the ſurprizing apparition, yet in a little time the ſenſe of it might wear off and he be never the better for it; it might put him into a fit of horror and conſternation, as the hand on the Wall did *Belſhazzer*, Dan. 5. 6. *ſo that his Countenance ſhould change, and the joints of his loins be looſed and his knees ſmite one againſt another*; but the fright might work upon his Body more than his Mind, and when that is over they might both return to their former and natural temper. Is it not uſual for a great many, who by a dangerous fit of ſickneſs are brought ſo near the other World, that they can almoſt ſee into it, and have at that time as firm a belief and as ſtrong a ſenſe of it, as if not only a Meſſenger from the dead came to them, but they were there themſelves; yet theſe when they riſe as it were from the dead, and return from the borders of another World, when they have recovered their health and are come into their old Company, their former Circumſtances and courſe of Life, how do they loſe the ſenſe of what they had in their ſickneſs, tho' it were never ſo ſtrong, and become the ſame Men they were before. Like perſons in a ſhipwrack, when the next Wave is likely to be their Sepulchre, and

and they think themſelves every moment ſinking into the deep below; then they are greatly concerned, and make a great many Vows and Reſolutions, which at that time they queſtion not to keep: but when the ſtorm and the fright is over, they forget all their good Intentions, and their Religious Temper goes off, and they return to their former Temper of Mind. It muſt be a calm and gentle, a ſedate and compoſed method that generally works upon a Man's mind, and brings by degrees new Thoughts and Diſpoſitions into it, rather than a ſudden and haſty fright, that only ſtartles and amazes it; and 'tis that is more agreeable to the nature of a free and reaſonable Creature, which is to be dealt withal by ſuch a ſuitable and kindly procedure, rather than that which has nothing in it but force and violence.

4. As God does ſeldom humour Men by doing any thing that is Miraculous or Extraordinary, when they have ſufficient ordinary means, ſo if he would do it, it would hardly cure their perverſe obſtinacy and infidelity; God is not willing to gratifie the wantonneſs or infidelity of mankind, and proſtitute his Almighty power to their Luſts and Follies by doing extraordinary things when there is no need of them: he will not work Miracles

cles as fast and as often as the Atheist is pleas'd to call for 'em, when he has given him other sufficient demonstrations of a Divine power; he will not send an Angel to Preach his Laws over all the Earth, or to speak to men every day with a voice of Thunder, when he has otherwise sufficiently made known his will to them. Our Saviour would not come down from the Cross to satisfie the Cavils and unreasonable Request of an unbelieving *Jew*, when he had done sufficient Miracles before to convince him; he would not give such a sign as was desired by an Evil and Adulterous Generation, *Mat.* 12. 39. when they had other signs enough. As this would make his Almighty power Cheap and Contemptible, to let it be at the pleasure and call of every unreasonable and humoursome person; so if he should exert it never so often, it would not have that effect we imagine upon them: for he, who is so unreasonable an Infidel and so obstinately unsatisfied as to shut his Eyes against full Evidence and just Conviction, will never be wrought upon in all likelihood by any thing that shall be done farther; though Heaven should be at a farther expence and tire it self as it were to do Miracles without End or Number, yet it would be still the same.

Of

Of this we have a very great inſtance in the Old Teſtament; *Pharaoh*, who had ſo many Miracles wrought before him, and as many Plagues as Miracles to make him Obedient to one Command of God, when he ſaw the Rivers and all the Water in his Country, turn'd into Blood, *Exod.* 7. 19. when all his Land was covered with Frogs, and they came into his preſence Chamber; when the duſt of the Earth was become Lice, and he could not but confeſs, that this was the finger of God; when a great many more Miracles, of which he could not but have a very great ſenſe, were done before his Eyes, yet ſtill his obſtinacy was too hard for 'em, and a Miracle beyond all the reſt. Indeed when he was under the preſent ſmart of a Judgment, it would awaken him for a moment, *Exod.* 8. 28. but as ſoon as it was removed, and he had reſpite, he was immediately hardned. And thus probably would an obſtinate and hardned ſinner, when a Meſſenger from the dead was talking with him, he would melt and ſoften, and cry out as *Pharaoh*, did, *I have ſinned*, *Exod.* 9. 27. and reſolve at that time to let his ſins go; but yet in a little time he would harden again and reſolve not to part with 'em. Of this there is an inſtance as great and ſtrange alſo in the New Teſtament, and that is not

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in a ſingle Perſon, but in a whole Nation. The *Jews* in our Saviour's time tho they ſaw him do ſuch works as never man did, ſuch as out-did all that were recorded of any of their own Prophets; tho' they ſaw him raiſe the dead, and cure the ſick, and were Eye-Witneſſes of the daily Miracles he wrought amongſt them, yet all this would not cure 'em of their obſtinate Infidelity; nor could the Son of God uſe any remedy for their perverſeneſs and wilfull incredulity: which plainly ſhows that men may arrive at ſuch Stubbornneſs and Infidelity, that even Miracles and the moſt extraordinary means will not work upon them. Where there is not ſuch an obſtinacy of the Will, but only a more innocent Ignorance cauſed by want of the ſame means that others have enjoyed; there thoſe extraordinary Miracles would have another effect, as if the works which our Saviour did in *Galilee had been done in* Tyre *and* Sidon, *they had long ago repented in ſack-cloath and aſhes*, as he tells 'em *Mat.* 11. 21. and ſo if a Meſſenger had come from the dead to thoſe that had never heard of *Moſes* or the Prophets, or never had any Revelation or Means of knowing thoſe things another way, they would probably have been perſwaded by him; but when Men have once ſtood out againſt the ordinary means that God has afford-

afforded them, there extraordinary ones will seldom prevail upon them, if God should think fit to make use of 'em; and that

5. As another reason why, if they heard not *Moses* and the Prophets, neither would they be perswaded tho' one rose from the dead; because the mind is so blinded by the love of its sins, and the Will so depraved and corrupted by them, especially by a long custom and habit continued in against all the ordinary means of Grace, and all the powerfull considerations of Religion, that it becomes utterly incurable. The love of Vice darkens a Mans mind, and blinds his reason and judgment, it bars up his Understanding against the plainest Truths, and makes him resolve not to believe that to be true, which it is his interest should be false; and from hence it is that a great many who would be glad that there were no Heaven or Hell hereafter, are brought to question the truth of them, and pretend not to be satisfi'd with that Account and Evidence that the Scripture gives of them: and if they had more, and the same that they do now require, to see one from the dead; yet the love of wickedness would still make 'em very unwilling to believe it, and their corrupted Wills would be too hard for their understandings; it

would be very hard to convince them that that was true, which they had ſo great an inclination and ſo great a deſire ſhould be falſe. And from hence it is, that Men's Infidelity ſprings in matters of Religion, not from want of ſufficient Conviction to their underſtandings, but from a corruption, and pravity of their Wills, by which means their underſtanding has a cloud and a film drawn over it, ſo that it is quite darkned to the cleareſt and moſt evident light; they grow ſenſeleſs and ſtupified, and their intellectuals are beſotted, and their reaſon depraved and the whole mind ſunk into ſuch a miſerable ſtate and condition, that they are become ſuch of whom the Scripture ſpeaks, *John* 12. 40. *He hath blinded their eyes and hardned their hearts, that they ſhould not ſee with their eyes, nor underſtand with their heart, and be converted ſo that God ſhould heal them,* and that neither with all the ordinary nor the extraordinary methods which he can uſe towards them. Let us therefore take care not to fall into ſuch a ſad ſtate and condition, by indulging our ſelves in the love or the practice of any wilfull ſin; which may by degrees ſo ſtrangely harden and deceive us, ſo faſcinate and bewitch us, that when it has baffled and overcome all the ordinary remedies of the Divine Grace and Providence, it ſhall be paſt

paſt all cure, and all poſſible recovery. We ſee how ſtrangely ſome Men are enſlaved to their ſins, tho' they ſee the greateſt miſchiefs that will certainly follow from them, that if they ſhould ſee Hell it ſelf even open before them, yet it would hardly prevail upon them: but let us conſider the great arguments of Religion, contained in *Moſes* and the Prophets, Chriſt and the Apoſtles. God has given us a ſtanding Canon and Revelation of his Will, which we may be ſure contains all things in it that are neceſſary to perſwade all Men to Repentance and carry 'em to Heaven; and 'tis this is the moſt proper and moſt perfect method that God has thought fit to make uſe of to that purpoſe, and much better than ſending Meſſengers from the dead to do this, which would ſignifie nothing, unleſs they were ſent in every particular Age, and to every particular Perſon: and what that could do, this the Holy Scriptures may do now, if we conſider and attend to them. The Papiſts indeed ſeem to be ſomething of the rich Man's mind, that the Scriptures are not ſufficient, nor the beſt way to convert Men; and therefore they have taken away thoſe from the people, and inſtead of them, have put their fabulous Legends, their ſtories of Purgatory, and of Men coming from the dead into their

hands: but a well attested and confirm'd Revelation has infinitely the advantage of all those, and therefore by those and by what is contained in them, let us be perswaded from a course of wickedness and impiety: Let those powerfull considerations of another World, which are there laid before us, prevail upon our hearts; and let us not hope if we neglect those ordinary and sufficient means, which God has appointed for that purpose, that we shall be made good, or converted by any miraculous or extraordinary methods of Divine Grace; for *if we hear not* Moses *and the Prophets*, and much more Christ and his Apostles, *neither should we be perswaded tho' one rose from the dead.*

THE

The Tenth Sermon.

ACTS XVII. 22. latter part.

I perceive that in all things ye are too superstitious.

ST. *Paul* speaks these words to the Citizens of *Athens*, in their great Court of Judicature, whither he was brought by the Philosophers and Learned Men of that University, *v.* 19. the *Epicureans* and the *Stoicks*, with whom he had been disputing about his Religion, and they were willing to bring him to that publick place, and to those great men that used to be there; not to have him Judged or Accused before them, as *Socrates* was formerly, for that appears not, and St. *Paul* had free liberty and went away without any restraint, *v.* 33. but only to gratify their Curiosity, and

to hear of the new Religion and the new God that they ſuppos'd he Preacht, for the *Athenians*, as they were deſirous of all other news, *v.* 21. ſo eſpecially in Religion, being the moſt forward to admit all ſort of Gods they heard of, into their Worſhip, and the moſt inclin'd to Religion, ſuch as it was of all the *Greeks*, Ἀθηναίους εὐσεβεστάτους τῶν Ἑλλήνων, as *Joſephus* and *Pauſanias* ſpeak of them. It is thought therefore by ſome, even *Chryſoſtom* and *Oecumenius*, that St. *Paul* means the ſame here by δεισιδαιμονεστέρους, and took occaſion here to commend 'em, and ſo the better to inſinuate himſelf, and like a skilfull Orator perſwade 'em to the true Religion, and that theſe words of his were deſign'd as a Compliment to 'em, and may be taken in a good ſenſe; but then he did not continue it, but ſpoke againſt the Idolatry that was amongſt 'em, and their repreſenting the *Godhead by gold or ſilver, or ſtone graven by art and man's device*, v. 29. From the Altar indeed that he ſaw among the other σεβάσματα *v.* 23. or the Images they worſhipt, with this inſcription *To the unknown God*, he took a fair occaſion of Preaching the true God to them, ſuppoſing at leaſt that they meant him, and that they ignorantly worſhip'd him that was the Creator, and the Supream, tho' it is hard to conceive how they meant, or knew him to be ſo,

when

when he was the ἄγνωστος *the unknown* to them by their own Confeſſion; However they acknowledged that there was a Deity, which they wanted among thoſe of their City, and that they were at a loſs for him; and therefore St. *Paul* made uſe of this, and thought it a ſeaſonable opportunity to Preach the true God to them whether they meant him by their Altar or no.

There have been diſputes about this among Learned men, but I intend not to conſider 'em or the particalar ſuperſtition of the *Athenians*, which conſiſted probably in a Religious and Ignorant forwardneſs of worſhipping all manner of Dæmons and Deities, that they could hear of; and all the Heathen Polytheiſm was ſuch a ſuperſtition, and aroſe from that ground: but I intend to diſcourſe to you of ſuperſtition in general, and that not of the ſignification of the word and its Etymology, but of the thing it ſelf, and what is truly meant by it, what is the nature of it, and wherein it conſiſts. Superſtition is a word that has made a great noiſe in the world, and, like other words of ambiguous and uncertain meaning, it has been clapt upon whatever men pleaſed, and been made a phraſe to denote whatever they diſlike in a Religion, whether they have reaſon for it or no; it has ſtood for a mark of what is to be hated, tho' they cannot tell why; to beget

an averſion to a thing and a ſuſpicion of ſomething ill in it, tho' they cannot clearly ſee or underſtand it. Indeed ſuperſtition has been the great Diſeaſe of Religion, it has like a Canker eat into the heart of it and conſumed it, it has put it generally into a great heat, but often into a Frenzy too, and grows ſometimes to a Religions diſtraction. 'Tis that by which the Devil when he cannot deſtroy the natural ſenſe of a God and Religion out of Mens minds, yet ſo darkens and diſorders it, that it may be of no great uſe to them, nor do much to deſtroy his intereſt or Kingdom in the World; it is too apt to grow up in weak, and not ſeldom in good and pious minds; it ſadly over-run all the Heathen World, and too ſoon crept into the Chriſtian Church; it ſticks like a ſecret Leproſie to many, even holy things, and the Prieſts themſelves do not diſcern it; and it is as common as any where among thoſe who are the loudeſt and fierceſt in exclaiming againſt it. But that we may underſtand what is the true nature of it, I ſhall endeavour to give you as clear an account of it as I can, in the following method.

1. By giving a general Definition or Deſcription of it, and explaining the parts of that.

2. By

2. By conſidering ſome particular inſtances of Superſtition, and examining others that are accounted ſo.

3. By enquiring into the true Cauſes of it, and the right means to avoid it.

I. By giving a general definition, *&c.* Now I would thus define ſuperſtition; 'Tis ſuch a miſtaken apprehenſion of God and Religion, as makes us worſhip him in an undue manner, and place Religion in thoſe things in which it does not really conſiſt.

1. 'Tis an apprehenſion of God. The ſuperſtitious have a great ſenſe upon their minds of a powerfull being above 'em; that there is a God who is the inviſible Lord of the World. This is the common belief of the religious and the ſuperſtitious. The Atheiſt, who thinks there is no ſuch Being, no ſpiritual and inviſible Powers above him, but that theſe are all the Spectres of fear and fancy, and the melancholy Images of our own ſcared Thoughts and Imaginations, he calls all Religion Superſtition, and thinks it the beſt way to free Mens minds from the ſlaviſh fears of a Being above them, to deny either him or his Providence, and clear his mind if he can from all the thoughts of Religion, that ſo horribly oppreſs it and keep it in bondage.

This

This is a mad and an extravagant project, and what he was encourag'd to from the folly and wildneſs of ſuperſtition, and the miſchief that it had done in the World, and from laying all the *ſcelerosa, atque impia facta*, all the Villanies which that had committed, to the charge of Religion. This is very diſ-ingenuous and unjuſt, and the other is a very falſe extravagance to expell the thoughts of a God, in order to the quiet and eaſe of our minds. There is no ſuch reaſon for fear and melancholy in the belief of a God, if we have true and right Conceptions of him; 'tis matter of the greateſt Comfort to us, to think there is an Almighty Being to take care of us, and to do us good; to keep the World orderly, and to govern all things below. We have all reaſon to rejoyce in our having ſuch a common Father to provide for us, and ſuch a Governor to protect us, who is wiſe and good as well as powerfull, which is the Notion of a God: ſad would be our Condition if there were not ſuch a being, and I know no ſuch melancholy conſideration, as that which the Atheiſt ſuppoſes to be the remedy for all his fears and diſquietudes, the believing there is no God; for then we take away all true hope and comfortable truſt, and have nothing at all to ſupport our ſinking minds, nor to re-

elieve the neceſſities of mankind; ſo that
ho' ſuperſtition believe a God, yet the
elief does not make Men ſuperſtitious;
ing.

2. 'Tis a wrong and miſtaken appre-
enſion of this God, the believing him to
e a ſevere and cruel Being, arm'd indeed
ith irreſiſtible power, but arbitrary and
ilfull in the uſe of it, and that may pro-
ably do infinite miſchief, and only ruin
nd deſtroy his innocent Creatures with
t; that may make them only to be the
aſtime of his rage, and the ſport and en-
ertainment of his Almighty revenge, and
ay damn the greateſt part of 'em to E-
ernal flames, only to ſhow his Greatneſs
nd incontrolable Power over them: or
f he be not thus Cruel and Tyrannical, yet
hat he is froward and pettiſh, hard to
e pleaſed and eaſily provoked; that
t is next to impoſſible to pleaſe him, and
tterly ſo to be reconcil'd to him when
e is angry: ſuch thoughts as theſe of
God, may very well produce a ſuperſti-
ious and uncomfortable dread of him,
nd fill the mind with nothing but ter-
or and aſtoniſhment, and a diſmal un-
ertainty and perplexity; and in theſe
lack colours ſuperſtition always draws
im with gaſtly look and terrible viſage;
with a brow always threatning, and a
and Armed with Thunder, and ready

to

to ſtrike without any regard to the merit or behaviour of thoſe that are under him. And were God ſuch a Being as this, without natural Juſtice or eſſential Righteouſneſs, were not his goodneſs as infinite as his power, and were not one as much his nature as the other, then indeed we might live as miſerably under the thoughts of him, as the moſt timorous Slave does under his merciles Patron, or the pooreſt Priſoner under his inſolent Keeper; and what will not ſuch fearfull wretches do to appeaſe the anger of ſuch a God, as they think is over them? what is ſo mean and baſe, what ſo fooliſh and ſilly, what ſo cruel and barbarous, that they will not perform to ſatisfie this devouring *Moloch*? It is very ſtrange that ever Men ſhould think the burning their Children alive, ſhould be an acceptable duty in Religion; or that cutting their own throats ſhould pleaſe their Gods; but when they have had ſuch dreadfull apprehenſions of them, no wonder that theſe cruel things were made the offices of their Religion, which were ſo ſuited to the conceptions of their Gods; For in the

3. Third place, theſe miſtaken apprehenſions of God, will put Men upon worſhipping him in an undue manner; the acts of worſhip and offices of Religion will

will be ſuitable to the conceptions we have of the Divine nature, if we think God is a ſevere and a cruel being, we ſhall think he delights in nothing ſo much as in bloody Sacrifices, and in having his Altars reek with Human gore, which was become a very general cuſtom, and a common office of the Gentile Religion; and the Devil, without doubt, endeavoured to bring mankind into this abominable ſuperſtition, by repreſenting God to be ſuch an one as himſelf, and by making his own Diabolical temper, to be the Image and Character of the Divine nature, by thus ſetting up himſelf as the Idol of God; this horrid worſhip did terminate in him, and what *the Gentiles thus offered they Sacrificed to Devils and not to God*, 1 Cor. 10. 20. But if we have other conceptions of God very unſuitable to his nature, if we think he is not a wiſe and righteous, but a vain being, that will be pleaſed with little and outward things, with affected Formalities and ſtudied Compliments, with officious Addreſſes and appearing ſhows, with adorning Images and pompous Proceſſions; then all our Religion quickly runs into thoſe trifling things, and to be ſure, it will ſome way be defective, if it have not a very right Foundation, a true conception of God and his Nature.

4. This

4. This will neceſſarily bring Men to wrong apprehenſions of Religion, and to place it in thoſe things in which it does not conſiſt; it will make them think God is pleaſed with what is no way agreeable to his nature, or elſe diſpleaſed with what is no way contrary to it: God's Love or Hatred to any thing, is founded in his Nature, and if we miſtake in that, we ſhall do ſo in his Will too, which is always Regulated and Conducted by the eſſential rectitude and perfections of his Nature; and this, as 'tis the trueſt Original, ſo 'tis the beſt Interpreter of the Will of God: but ſuperſtition that knows not God aright, as it is afraid of him, as of a Friend in the dark, ſo in other things it fears where no fear is; and yet thinks to oblige by ſuch pitifull things as would hardly pleaſe a wiſe Man, and much leſs a wiſe God; it will keep off from ſome very innocent things, as if all the bane of the ſeven deadly ſins were in them, and yet will ſwallow down many a Camel, whilſt it ſtrains ſo hard at a ſingle Gnat; it will be as punctual and zealous in ſome little performances as if they were the ſum and ſubſtance of Chriſtianity, tho' they are perhaps hardly the ſhell and outſide of it: and what is the main and the ſubſtantial part of it, that it ſhall think of lit-

little worth, in Compariſon to the other; it ſhall fall ſhort of the plain and moral duties of Religion, and over-do it in the poſitive ones to make amends or commute for the other; it ſhall ſeem in ſome things to be an exceſs of Religion, as ſome have defined ſuperſtition; but 'tis but as the Rickets is an exceſs of Nouriſhment in ſome parts that want it not, whilſt the others do conſume and pine away; 'tis really the defect of Religion. It ſhall ſeem to court God and flatter him, but not love him; for ſuperſtition is often a ſort of religious flattery that makes more than ordinary pretences, and gives greater ſhows of kindneſs to Heaven, but yet fails in performing that true and honeſt ſervice which it ought; it is for offering ſomething of its own, and thinks to pleaſe God with its little Inventions, whilſt it denies him that which he requires of his; but theſe are but general Characters and Deſcriptions of ſuperſtition. I proceed in the

2. Second place to conſider ſome particular inſtances of it, and to examine a few of thoſe that are accounted ſuch and are not ſo. And

1. I account all the Heathen Polytheiſm, and Worſhip of many Deities, Heroes and Damons, and their Inferior Gods to be the firſt and trueſt part of ſuperſtition, this

this is δεισιδαιμονία in the ſtricteſt ſence of that word, and was ſuch as the *Athenians* were greatly guilty of, and charged with it here by St. *Paul*; for all Idolatry, tho' it be a breach of the ſecond command, yet is truly ſuperſtition, which is ſaid to be a breach of the firſt; it ariſes from a very miſtaken notion of the true God, and from an immoderate fear of all thoſe other beings that it ſuppoſes under him, and next to him in power and other perfection; it thinks them worthy of Divine Honour and Veneration, and that they are the Authors of very great bleſſings and favours to mankind; and that they ought to have addreſſes made to them, to be pray'd to in ſickneſs and in danger, and under any affliction or extremity: and ſo makes it ſelf a Penſioner to them, and lives not only under the fear and awe of thoſe, but under expectations from, and dependencies upon thoſe as well as the ſupreme and the great God. This was the true ground of the Heathen Polytheiſm and Idolatry: They took the inferior Deities to be the Miniſters of State and Governors of the World under the Supreme, and they Worſhipt them as their immediate and particular Patrons; and as is plain from *Maximus Tyrius*, they accounted them their Mediators, by whom they made their addreſſes

ſes to the greateſt God; this was thought by them to be an humble deference to him, who was too great to have immediate worſhip or prayers offer'd to him, by perſons ſo much below him, and therefore they made uſe of others; and ſo in time forgot the ſupreme, and paid no Religious offices to him at all, but gave away that honour and worſhip that was due only to him, to the meaneſt, and to the worſt of his Creatures, and even to the wicked Angels and to the Devils themſelves: and how ſad was the ſuperſtition of the Heathen World, and how the knowledge of the true God was almoſt quite loſt among 'em, before the coming of our Saviour, who came to deſtroy all falſe worſhip and ſuperſtition, both the Scriptures and the Heathens themſelves ſufficiently inform us.

2. The next inſtance of ſuperſtition to the Heathen Polytheiſm and very near of kin to it, is that of worſhipping Saints and Angels, Images and Reliques, which is too notoriouſly practis'd in the Church of *Rome*: This is ſo rank and open a ſuperſtition, that it comes up to the trueſt Etymology of the Greek and Latin word, δαιμονία, which if good Beings are Angels, and the Souls that are departed, being the *ſuperſtites* that they ſuppoſe now living in Heaven, which agrees with the

account that *Tully* and *Lactantius* give of it. This worſhip of Angels was a very ancient ſuperſtition of ſome Heretical Chriſtians, which St. *Paul* cautions againſt, Coloſ. 2. 18. *Let no man beguile you of your reward in a voluntary humility and worſhipping of Angels.* This it ſeems was ſuppoſed to be a point of humility upon ſome account, I ſuppoſe upon the principle of the *Gentiles*, that they thought it too great a thing to addreſs to the Majeſty of God, without the Angels as Mediators: but beſides that, this is an Encroachment upon the Office of Chriſt, who is the only Mediator between God and Man, 1 *Tim.* 2. 5. to chooſe other Mediators for our ſelves: It is the putting the Angels upon an Office, they were never appointed to by God, and a ſuperſtitious truſt and confidence placed in them, without any manner of ground, and *intruding into thoſe things which we have not ſeen*, Col. 2. 18. and a new ſort of worſhip which the Scripture hath no where Commanded or Countenanc'd, but expreſly forbidden, *Rev.* 19. 10. And ſuch is the ſuperſtitious reverence given to Images and Reliques, as if there were any thing Sacred in them; or any Vertue to be expected by them, or the relation they had to the Perſon or Prototype were a ſufficient ground of giving religious Ho-

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nour and Worſhip to them; I know not whether the folly of this ſuperſtition, or the ſin be greater, 'tis as low in many caſes as any almoſt among the Heathens: and the *Egyptians* worſhipping the ſpots upon the *Apis*, the *Ibis* and the Herbs of their Garden, as thinking a Divine Vertue reſided in them, is very near as innocent and defenſible.

3. Another inſtance of ſuperſtition, is to think to pleaſe God with greater acts of ſeverity and mortification than he has required, and to place a higher perfection in thoſe things, than in all the other parts of Religion, which God himſelf has commanded.

This was a very early ſuperſtition in the very beginning of Chriſtianity, when ſome of the Hereticks were not contented with the plain and excellent duties of Faith and Love, and Meekneſs, and the like; but they muſt be for ſomething more ſingular and extraordinary, that made a greater ſhow of more abſtinence and ſeverity and ſelf-denial, *and had*, as the Apoſtle ſays, *a ſhow of wiſdom in will worſhip and humility and neglecting of the body*, Col. 2. 23. and they would deny themſelves all the Lawfull and Innocent pleaſures of Life, and would abſtain from all manner of Wine and Fleſh, and uſe greater Watchings and Faſtings than the o-

ther Christians generally did, and forbid all Meats and Marriages, with a *touch not, taſt not, handle not*; ſo *Epiphanius* tells us the *Gnoſticks* did, and the *Ebionites*, who were every day baptized and carefully abſtained from all Fleſh, and were ſo afraid of Wine, that they celebrated the Euchariſt only in Water, and ſo were called *Aquarii*: And thus did *Marcion* and *Montanus*, and the *Manichees* pretend all to very great abſtinencies and ſeverities, and affect ſomething very ſingular and ſelf-denying that Chriſtianity never requir'd of them; they thought that was too low in thoſe things, and they were therefore for adding to it ſome purer and higher precepts of ſtrictneſs, which neither Chriſt nor his Apoſtles ever requir'd. 'Tis from theſe Schools of the Hereticks, that our Roman Catholicks have learnt their rules of Perfection, and have ſet up their Monkiſh Societies, like thoſe of the *Eſſens* and *Pythagoreans*, wherein they pretend to greater abſtinencies and ſelf-denials, and to a higher ſort of Chriſtianity than what the Goſpel has any where commanded: but ſurely our Saviour knew as well as theſe Men wherein the perfection of Religion lay; and he has given us as perfect and ſublime Laws and Directions of Vertue, as could be; and however theſe greater

ſeverities

ſeverities look more plauſible and more ſelf-denying, yet they are forced and unnatural, a ſort of Stoical or Cynical Inſtitution, rather than Chriſtian, a taking Men off from doing greater good and being more uſefull to the World, a Reflection, a Diſparagement upon the Goſpel as not giving us the beſt rules and the moſt perfect precepts, but that we can invent better and higher our ſelves; and, in a word, a ſuperſtitious and ungrounded belief that there is any thing evil or unlawfull in the Natural and Innocent Enjoyments that God has no where forbidden and reſtrain'd us from; and that the abſtaining from thoſe is a way better to pleaſe God and to recommend our ſelves to him, than by living up to the plain and honeſt duties of the Goſpel. This part of ſuperſtition which lies in a ſhow of greater humility and ſeverity, and abſtinence, is mighty apt to cheat the World, and therefore it has been made uſe of generally by thoſe who would draw people into their Communion and Party; and it has done no little ſervice to the Papiſts on one ſide, who tell us of their vows of Poverty and Chaſtity, their hair ſhirts, and their other ſeverities; and the Quakers on the other ſide, who affect a ſhow of humility and ſingularity in their Garb and their Words, and

think that 'tis Religion not to ſpeak or be habited as other people, nor to uſe the common expreſſions of Civility and good Manners; but no where has Chriſt or his Religion Commanded us to be Cynicks, nor did he give us any ſuch example by any affected ſingularity in his own life; but has bid us live innocently and love one another, and told us that this is the perfection of Chriſtianity, whereby we ſhall know that we are his Diſciples, and not by any Monkiſh ſeverities or ſuperſtitious abſtinencies and ſelf-denials of what is Lawfull and Innocent; We may uſe thoſe upon account of Prudence, or by reaſon of ſome particular Circumſtances, but to place Religion in doing ſo, that is ſuperſtition.

I might name a great many other inſtances of ſuperſtition in the Roman Church, in their Pilgrimages and viſiting of Shrines, in their whipping themſelves, and going bare-foot, in their Penances, their Maſſes and Indulgencies; whereby they place Religion in very fooliſh and ridiculous things of no manner of worth or value, and think to pleaſe God and atone for their ſins, and reconcile themſelves to Heaven, by ſuch performances as God has no where commanded, and are no way proper for it.

4. A great part of superstition lies in ascribing a Divine Virtue and Power to such things as are meerly natural and have no such Virtue in them; as the making every accident a sign of something, as the Heathens did the flight of Birds, (δεξιὸς ὄρνις, Ἀιετὸς ὑψιπετὴς in *Homer*) and some now a Hare's crossing the way; as if these Natural Accidents were Divine Omens, and portended any evil, and that God made them notices of his mind to us, which we have no reason to believe; so the feeding of Chickens, croaking of Ravens, the ῥαβδομαντεία striking a staff against the ground, to which the Prophet is thought to refer *Hosea* 4. 12. κλειδομαντεία, and the other auspicious signs, as Lightning on the right hand, ἀστράπτων ἐπιδεξὶ in *Homer*, and with us the falling of the Salt, which *Suidas* calls, δεισιδαιμονεῖν ἐπὶ τοῖς σημείοις to be superstitious observers of signs, as if they were made such by a secret Divine signification, when they are not: So the observing Ominous and Auspicious days, as if there were any secret Virtue in them, is an old Heathenish superstition, as we may see in *Hesiod* his ἡμέραι one of the oldest Heathen Poems. And generally 'tis the same natural superstition, and ascribing Occult and Divine Virtues to such things as have no such thing in them, to which God has no way annext any such Virtue or

Power, as the using Spells, Charms, Magical knots, and Ligatures, and the like, which St. *Austin* calls, *execranda superstitio*; and the observing dreams and such natural things, which proceed only from natural causes, as if there were something Divine in them; this is a great spice of the Heathen superstition.

5. A great part of Superstition lies in placing the main substance of Religion, in some positive and external duties, that are only of lesser value, as the *Jews* did in their keeping Fasts and Sabbaths, and offering Sacrifices and observing Circumcision, and the other Rites of their Law; which tho' they were commanded by God, yet the placing Religion chiefly in them, and not in inward Goodness and Righteousness, was what the Prophets always condemned and reproved them for, as you may see, *Isa.* 1. 11. *To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices to me, saith the Lord? I am full of the burnt offerings of rams and the fat of fed beasts, and I delight not in the blood of bullocks, or of lambs, or of he-goats. When ye come to appear before me, who hath required this at your hand to tread my courts? bring no more vain oblations, incense is an abomination to me, your new moons and sabbaths, the calling of assemblies I cannot away with, your new moons and appointed feasts my soul hateth*; v. 16. *Wash you, make*

you

you clean, put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes, ceaſe to do evil, learn to do well, ſeek judgment, relieve the oppreſſed, judge the fatherleſs, plead for the widow.

6. Superſtition may lie in the opinion of indifferent things that are uſed for order and decency in religious worſhip, as if there were any true ſanctity on one ſide, or any real ſin on the other in the uſe of them. To ſay that no Indifferencies and Ceremonies muſt be uſed in the worſhip of God, but what he has commanded, is to condemn the Jewiſh and the Chriſtian Church, and even all Parties in Religion, who can never worſhip God without ſome ſuch; and therefore 'tis true ſuperſtition to think there is a ſin in thoſe, and that God will be diſpleaſed at what is no way ſinfull and unlawfull in it ſelf, and is confeſs'd not to be ſo before it is impoſed, when it is impoſed for mere order and decency: ſo on the other ſide 'tis ſuperſtition to think there is any real ſanctity in thoſe, or that they are true parts, and not meerly Circumſtances of worſhip; that there is a real Goodneſs in the things themſelves and that they are a means to pleaſe God and procure his favour; and that there is ſuch a Vertue in them to do this meerly for themſelves, tho' there were no human authority required them of us; As the *Jews* thought

of

of the Traditions of their Elders.

But the charge of ſuperſtition is brought nearer to us, and laid to our own Church, and it concerns us rather to vindicate our ſelves than to lay it upon others. We blame the Papiſts for placing Religion in ſuch things as God has not commanded, and for a ſuperſtitious uſe of ſeveral Rites and Ceremonies no where preſcribed in the Goſpel; but do not we our ſelves commit the ſame fault in uſing a great many Rites and Ceremonies in our worſhip, which are no where commanded of God, and are only human inventions and impoſitions, and therefore ſuperſtitious? This therefore I deſign to enquire into, which is a great ſtumbling block to many who do not well underſtand ſuperſtition, and are ſuperſtitiouſly afraid of it, where there is no ſuch thing; nor are well acquainted with the nature and deſign of thoſe Rites which are uſed in the Church of *England*, and what it ſelf teaches concerning them.

I ſhall therefore in this place examine whether to uſe any thing in the worſhip of God, which he himſelf has not commanded, be ſuperſtition; and to vindicate our Rites and Ceremonies from ſuch an imputation, and particularly thoſe bodily acts of worſhip, which are moſt ſuſpected to be ſo, kneeling at the Sacra-

ment

ment, and the like; and that I may do this to the ſatisfaction of all perſons who do not reſolve that they will never be ſatisfied; I ſhall offer theſe ſeveral things about this matter.

1. If it be ſuperſtition to uſe any thing in the worſhip of God, which he himſelf has not commanded, and which is not preſcribed by a Divine Law, then the Diſſenters themſelves, be they of what Party or Denomination ſoever, are very guilty of ſuperſtition; for they all of them uſe a great many things in their worſhipping of God, for which there is no Divine Law or Command; as for Example, where is it Commanded that they ſhall uſe a conceived prayer of their own and not pray by a form? Where is it Commanded that they ſhould receive the Sacrament ſitting and not kneeling? Where is it Commanded that the Miniſter ſhall be cloathed in black, and ſhall not wear a Surplice when he Officiates? thoſe things that are in uſe among them are no more Commanded by a Law of God, than thoſe among us.

2. If it be ſuperſtitious to uſe any thing in the worſhip of God, that God himſelf has not preſcribed, then what ſhall we think of ſeveral things that the *Jews* uſed in their worſhip, which God had not Commanded, and yet, both our Saviour

viour and his Apoſtles complied with them, in 'em; as for Example, in all their Synagogue-worſhip, whither our Saviour and his Apoſtles often reſorted, and yet they had no Command for it in their Law, but only for their worſhip at the Temple or Tabernacle; They had no Command in their Law for Reading and Preaching *Moſes* there every Sabbath day, as was accuſtomed, *Acts* 15. 21. nor for that form of Prayer and Liturgy which they uſed there, and in which, no doubt, but our Saviour and his Apoſtles joyned with them; Nay, there was no expreſs Law for all their Temple worſhip, nor for building their Temple, nor for their Prayers and their Hymns there, which were a great many of them appointed by *David* and their other Governors; there was no precept for their hours of Prayer, which were obſerved by the Apoſtles, *Acts* 3. 1. there was no Divine Command for the Feaſt of the Dedication, at which our Saviour was preſent, *John* 10. 22. and yet he never in the leaſt reproved thoſe unappointed uſages as having any thing of ſuperſtition in them; but complied with them and countenanc'd them by his own Example: So in the Paſſover which is a very conſiderable rite and part of Jewiſh worſhip, our Saviour uſed the poſture of lying and diſcumbency in the eating

ing of it, tho' that was not the posture Commanded in the Law, and at the first institution of it, *Exodus* 12. 11. but taken up afterwards by the Jewish Church, when they were settled with ease and liberty in the Land of *Canaan*; and the Cup of Charity also, that was not of Divine institution, yet this our Saviour used also, after the manner of the *Jews*, *Luke* 22. 17. and was pleased to conform to many innocent and inoffensive rites of the *Jewish* Church in their Divine worship, though they were not all of them expresly Commanded or Prescribed by God.

3. The whole Christian Church did use some things in their worship, which were no way Commanded by Christ. The Holy kiss or the kiss of Charity, which is mention'd *Romans* 16. 16. 1 *Pet.* 5. 14. was an outward symbol of Love and Charity, which the Christians used at their meeting at Prayers and the Sacrament; and such were their Love Feasts or Feasts of Charity, which were Celebrated together with the Lords Supper, 1 *Cor.* 11. 20. *Jude* 12. These were only such rites, as the Christians, without any Command of Christ, thought fit to join with the most solemn parts of the Christian worship; and yet they were of so indifferent and alterable a nature that the Christian Church

Church has thought it matter of prudence to lay them aſide; And whoever is acquainted with the ſtate of the Chriſtian Church in its pureſt times and immediately after the Apoſtles, knows there were ſeveral Eccleſiaſtical rites appointed by the Governors of it, and ſeveral Canons made in their Synods and Councils concerning indifferent things; as there was before by the Apoſtles in the Council of *Hieruſalem*, Acts 15.29. prudential rules and orders concerning *blood and things ſtrangled*, which they then impos'd upon the *Gentiles* for that time, but yet the obligation of them does not continue: And he that will defend that Doctrine, that nothing is Lawfull in the worſhip of God, that is not preſcribed by himſelf, muſt not only condemn all the Reform'd Churches abroad, who both practice and teach otherwiſe in all their Confeſſions; but the whole Catholick Church ever ſince Chriſt and his Apoſtles, which has found it neceſſary to appoint many external rites in their religious ſervice.

4. It is impoſſible in the nature of the thing to perform Divine worſhip without ſome rites and uſages, that God has now here Commanded; nor is it poſſible to make Laws concerning theſe to reach all places, for they muſt alter according to the ſeveral Manners and Cuſtoms of different People and Countries. We muſt wor-

worſhip God with all ſigns of Honour and Reverence, with reſpect and decency becoming ſo great a Majeſty; but the marks and outward ſigns of Honour alter and change according to Cuſtoms, and Places, and People, that 'tis impoſſible particularly to determine them. As for Example, pulling off the Shoe is a ſign of Honour and Reverence in the Eaſtern Countries, as pulling off the Hat with us; and to this it is thought the precepts of the wiſe man alludes, *Eccleſ.* 5. 1. *Keep thy foot when thou goeſt into the houſe of God*, i. e. be carefull to ſhow all manner of Reverence in his preſence, as the *Jews* did, who always went barefoot into God's houſe, as the *Mahometans*, I think, do ſtill into their religious places; but this would be a very odd and irreverent thing with us. It was no irreverence among the *Jews* to have their heads covered in Divine worſhip, at their Prayers and Sacrifices, when the Prieſts conſtantly wore their Caps and Bonnets, and ſometimes Veils and other coverings; and ſo *Plutarch* ſays it was accounted comely among the *Romans* to be covered at their worſhip, but among the *Grecians* it was quite otherwiſe, and at *Corinth*, where St. *Paul* declares it to be an act of irreverence, for the Men to Pray or Propheſie, having the head covered, 1 *Cor.*

Cor. 11. 4. tho' it was otherwiſe for the Women. And therefore ſince matter of decency and order depends upon particular Cuſtoms and Places, and Circumſtances, and is in it ſelf variable and mutable; there cannot be a Law given to determine it in all places; nor is it poſſible to have all the little Rites and Circumſtances of religious worſhip be comprehended in a Divine Law; and therefore in the

5. Fifth place, God has left thoſe to be determined by particular Churches and Governors, and has only commanded the ſubſtantials of his worſhip, and given general Rules for *all things to be done decently and in order*, 1 *Cor.* 14. 40. and for mutual edification; and the leſſer circumſtances and adjuncts that belong to Divine worſhip, thoſe he has left undetermined and indifferent; and thoſe to whom he has committed the Government of the Church, they are to ſettle thoſe for prevention of confuſion and diſorder, according to the rules of Prudence and thoſe general meaſures which God has given in the Goſpel. It is plain he has no where Commanded them himſelf, nor can there be any particular directory for them produced out of the Scriptures; and as plain it is that there would be perpetual confuſion and diſorder in the

the Church if these were not appointed in several places, by those who are Governors of it: and when they are so they are to be obeyed and observed, when there is nothing in them that is contrary to a Law of God; they cannot be unlawfull, when no Law forbids them, but they may become necessary in their use, when they were indifferent in their nature, by a Lawfull Authority's commanding them; and surely there can be no sin or superstition in them upon that account. Which that I may then clear the particular Ceremonies and Impositions of our Church from, I shall very freely and openly give you my thoughts in some farther particulars, about the lawfull and the superstitious use of these things in the worship of God.

1. I own that there ought to be no new parts of worship other than what God himself has appointed; there may be new circumstances and adjuncts appointed, but no real and substantial parts of Divine worship: As for Example no human Authority can institute new Sacraments, as the Church of *Rome* does, or more Sacramental parts of worship, than those two which Christ himself has appointed, to wit, Baptism and the Lord's Supper; but whether Baptism shall be performed by sprinkling or by dipping, that is but a circumstance which the Church may determine, according to the diffe-

rence of the Climate or the ſtrength of the Child, or the ſeaſon of the year; and is left to every Miniſter's diſcretion in his own Church, and ſo alſo whether it ſhall be by ſingle or a trine immerſion; this, as not being an eſſential of Baptiſm, has been variouſly determined. So in the other Sacrament none can add or take away from an eſſential part of Chriſt's own Inſtitution, as the Papiſts do in depriving the Laity of the Cup; but whether we ſhall take this in a poſture of ſitting or kneeling, or (which is very ancient) ſtanding, is not eſſential to it, but what the Church may appoint, as it thinks moſt becoming ſo ſolemn a Duty, and moſt ſuiting the Prayers and Devotions that are joyn'd with it, which no doubt kneeling is. So farther to uſe Adoration and Invocation to God alone, and not to Angels or Saints, is a neceſſary duty; but whether we ſhould pray to God with a form or without it, this is not neceſſary, tho' the former be much more convenient in publick, to prevent the many faults and undecencies of extemporary effuſions: ſo whether we adore God by bowing, or by proſtration, or by kneeling, or by ſtanding, as the ancient Church did between Eaſter and Pentecoſt, is only a new manner or circumſtance of adoration, not a new act or part of it. And this I have the more carefully illuſtrated, that we

may

may ſee the difference between parts of worſhip, and only accidents and appendages and circumſtances of worſhip; The Church of *England* appoints only the latter, not any ſubſtantial worſhip or any parts of it, but what God himſelf has appointed, as will appear farther.

2. That which is in it ſelf very Lawfull and Innocent may become ſuperſtitious by the opinion which he that uſes it, has of it; as if he thinks it is a means to pleaſe God, and procure his favour, and that it has ſuch a vertue in it ſelf to do this, as that God would be pleaſed with us for the doing this, and diſpleaſed with us if we ſhould not do it, meerly for it ſelf, tho' there were no human Authority that required it of us; as the *Jews* thought that their waſhing of their hands would pleaſe God, and that it was a defilement of their Conſciences to eat with unwaſhen hands, which was the miſtake our Saviour reproves them for, *Mat.* 15. 20. their ſuperſtitious opinion of that Ceremony, and the Tradition of their Elders to think that it was a piece of Sanctity and Religion to waſh their hands, and that it was a ſin and real defilement of their Conſciences, not to do it; to aſcribe a true ſpiritual Vertue to an outward Ceremony, as that it expiated inward guilt, and was not a meer indifferent matter of decency, which was the true fault of the *Jews* in that mat-

ter. And such a superstitious opinion the Papists have of their Holy Water, that it cleanses them from venial sins, and drives away the Devil; as they also say of the sign of the Cross, that it has a proper efficiency against the power of the Devil; and that their Ceremonies have a real efficacy, and produce spiritual effects upon those that use them; that they are operative of Grace, or that they have any proper and real goodness in them, antecedent to the Command of Authority, and their being subservient to meer order and decency, and to the external solemnity of Religion. This indeed makes them superstitious, and this the Pharisees thought of their Traditions, and therefore *taught for Doctrines the Commandments of Men*, Matthew 15. 9. i. e. their own commands and impositions, as if they had had a like Divine Authority and Institution, and had had an equal Authority if not superiour to the Laws of God; for they sometimes made void the Law of God by their Traditions. But this the Church of *England* wholly disclaims, and therefore in the

3. Third place, its own declarations concerning the nature and use, and design of all its Rites and Ceremonies do sufficiently vindicate it, from the least shadow or semblance of superstition. It declares that it looks on the Rites and Cere-

Ceremonies uſed in the Liturgy, as things in their own nature indifferent and alterable, and that changes and alterations may be made as ſeems neceſſary or expedient to thoſe in Authority; and that every Country is at liberty to uſe their own Ceremonies, and that it neither condemns others nor preſcribes to them. Theſe are its own words in the Preface to the Common Prayer, and there is moſt excellent Temper and Wiſdom in them; it declares that they are appointed only for order and decency, and not for any virtue or ſpiritual efficacy; it declares concerning kneeling at the Sacrament, that it is only a decent poſture, and that it is not deſign'd to give any Adoration to the Elements. Concerning the Croſs in Baptiſm it makes it no part of the Sacrament, but owns the Child to be Baptiz'd without it, and requires it not in private Baptiſm, and that 'tis only a ſign that the Child is become the Diſciple of the Crucifi'd Jeſus, and is not aſham'd to wear his Badge upon it; it attributes no peculiar holineſs to its Ceremonies as the Papiſts do to theirs; it aſcribes no ſpiritual vertue and efficacy, nor makes them operative of Grace, but declares that they are only for order and decency, and are indifferent in their own nature, even after they are determined, and that they are required only by ver-

tue of that general obedience that we owe to lawfull Authority. And he that will think there is any ſuperſtition in theſe, may in time come to the Quakers principle, and think it ſuperſtition to pull off his hat; but ſo far is the Church of *England* from all the ſuperſtitions of the Roman Church, and ſo wiſe and moderate in its whole conſtitution, that as I believe it in my Conſcience to be the beſt Church in the World, and the fartheſt from Superſtition; ſo I do not at all doubt but the Papiſts themſelves as well as others have raiſed and promoted this loud outcry of ſuperſtition againſt it, as knowing that it is the greateſt Enemy to their ſuperſtitious worship, and that it is impoſſible to bring in their ſopperies and ſuperſtitions, till the manly and decent worship of the Church of *England* be run down and deſtroyed; which God in his mercy prevent, and which, I hope, our Diſſenting Brethren will endeavour to prevent alſo, if they are truly Enemies to ſuperſtition. But in the

4. Fourth place I muſt plainly tell 'em that they are more guilty of ſuperſtition in avoiding the Communion of our Church for the ſake of thoſe indifferent Rites and Ceremonies, than that is for impoſing 'em; for it is as truly ſuperſtition to think God will be offended at little things, and diſpleaſed with us for doing what is no way ſinfull or unlawfull, as to think he

he will be pleaſed with us for what is indifferent, and no way good in its ſelf. Superſtition does as often proceed from an anxious and ungrounded fear as from a fond and vain hope; and as he is ſuperſtitious in the outward things of Religion, who lays a greater ſtreſs upon them than they deſerve, who thinks Religion lies in them, and that God is pleaſed with them meerly for themſelves; ſo he is as truly ſo, who thinks there is a great evil or ſin in them, and avoids them upon that account and thinks he ſhould diſpleaſe God, if he ſhould obſerve 'em. This is not only diſobedience to our Governors, and to lawfull Authority which is a great ſin, when they command nothing that is unlawfull, that is contrary to any law of God; for if we muſt not obey them in ſuch a caſe, we muſt obey them in nothing at all, if we muſt not obey them in things indifferent; and if it be a ſin to obey them in ſuch a caſe, it is a ſin that neither God nor Man have made ſo, but the quite contrary. Beſides this I ſay, and the breach of Chriſtian Unity, and the horrid guilt of Schiſm and Separation which can never be juſtified but where things unlawfull and not things indifferent are Commanded and made Terms of Communion; beſides this, I ſay, it is truly ſuperſtition to think it unlawfull to Communicate with us, for the ſake of indifferent Ceremonies; to think God is offend-

ed or displeased at what is in it self very innocent, and is confest by themselves to be so in its own nature before it was imposed.

3. I come now to consider the last and third head of discourse; that is the Causes and the Cure of superstition. And as to the Causes they are as many and the same, as of false Religion or false Worship of God, for that is the notion of superstition; 'tis a religious sense of the mind mixt with great error and darkness; nay, 'tis not only Religion blind, but crazed and distemper'd too; in some 'tis come to a perfect rage and distraction; as in the bloody and barbarous superstitions of the Heathens, who offer'd up their Slaves and Children as Sacrifices to their Deities, and thought it Religion to murder themselves and sprinkle the Altars with human gore; in others the frenzy is not so high nor does it work so strongly, but puts 'em only upon foolish, and antick, and silly ways of worshipping and pleasing God, and discovers it self in lesser symptoms. It is the design of superstition to please the Deity, but it uses wrong ways, and does something that is very improper in order to its Design. It is very forward in Religion, and like the Clown that would be very mannerly and over officious, but knows not how, and so commits a thou-

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and rudeneſſes and indecencies in his awkard deportment; ſo does the ſuperſtitious make ſhows and appearances of courtſhip to Heaven, but he is out in all of them, and does not what is proper, what is really obliging and acceptable to it.

The Devil not being able to deſtroy the religious ſenſe that is in our minds, not being able to root out that which Nature has planted in every man's breaſt, a ſenſe of a God and a Divine Being above us; he endeavours to ſpoil and corrupt that as much as he can, and to ſow ſuch cockle and tares among the good and natural ſeed of Religion as may quite choke it and make it unfruitfull; as may alter its kind, and make it produce ſuch fruit as is not true and genuine, but quite of another nature, as looks like Religion, and like the Apples of *Sodom* ſeem more fair outwardly, but is another thing within; becauſe he cannot hinder men from being Religious, but there is ſomething within themſelves will make them ſo in ſpite of all his attempts and deſigns to the contrary, therefore he will make 'em ſuperſtitious; becauſe he cannot ſtop the religious inſtinct and inclination of their minds, he will determine and ſet it wrong; becauſe he cannot dry up that natural ſpring of Religion that riſes up in every

every ones breaſt, he will poyſon and corrupt it; and becauſe Religion is ſo deeply and ſtrongly rooted in human nature, that it can never be wholly pluck'd up by him, therefore he will graft upon it ſuch falſe and ſuperſtitious principles as ſhall quite alter it's nature; and tho' they are fed and nouriſh'd by a religious ſenſe at the bottom, yet this vine ſhall bring forth Thorns, and this Fig-tree Thiſtles, and from this ſweet Fountain ſhall come forth Salt and bitter Waters: by a ſuperſtitious mixture Religion ſhall be changed and perverted, both in its nature and its effects; This is the ſaddeſt miſchief to true Religion, that it ſhould be thus made to deſtroy it ſelf, that its force and power ſhould be turned upon its ſelf, and it ſhould be conſumed like ſome Animals by what grows out of it ſelf: 'Tis thus the Devil moſt ſucceſsfully countermines God, and deſtroys Religion, by turning it into ſuperſtition, which how it is done, and by what means effected, I ſhall endeavour to ſhow you in three prrticulars.

1. By making Men vitious and wicked, for tho' ſuperſtition may often grow up in weak and ſilly minds that may be innocent and far from being guilty of very great and notorious vices; yet I believe the firſt and moſt general cauſe of ſuper-

ſuperſtition in the World is Vice and Wickedneſs; the Devil has firſt drawn Men to that, and then has led them into all manner of errors and falſhoods; he has firſt debauch'd their morals and then their underſtandings; he has firſt wrought upon their Wills and Affections by abominable Luſts and Vices, and then he has quickly corrupted their Judgments and led 'em into all manner of miſtakes in Religion. The ſuperſtition of the Heathen World aroſe, I doubt not, from that horrible corruption of manners that was among them; they would never have ſet up ſuch a Religion as they did, made up of nothing almoſt but obſcenity and filthineſs, cruelty and blood, apiſhneſs and folly, had not they been as the Apoſtle repreſents the Heathen World, *Rom.* 1. *Vain in their imaginations and fill'd with all* manner of *unrighteouſneſs, implacable* and *unmerciſull* in their own tempers, and given up to the moſt beaſtly Luſts and unnatural Lewdneſſes; theſe Vices in themſelves naturally lead them to ſuch a falſe Religion and ſuch ſuperſtitious abominations as they were guilty of. But as their manners decay'd ſo did the true Religion and the right worſhip of God, and as vice got ground ſo did ſuperſtition, and they always grew up and encreaſed, and like *Hippocrates* his Twins, lived and died

ed together. What hidden cauſe thus link-ed them together, and how they came to be ſuch inſeparable Companions may ſeem ſtrange when ſuperſtition owns and acknowledges a God, has a great ſenſe of him upon the mind; but if we conſider that this ſenſe of a God, when it has not had ſuch a due effect as it ought upon it, ſo as to preſerve it vertuous and Innocent, but Luſt and Wickedneſs and the Temptations of the Devil have overcome it; this ſenſe of its own Wickedneſs joyned with the ſenſe of a God, does very naturally and eaſily bring it to ſuperſtition. If it had no ſenſe of a God, nor no belief of ſuch a being at all; if it could get rid of that, which it never can, then indeed there would be no ground of ſuperſtition, and this way the Atheiſt would free himſelf from all ſuperſtitious fears: or if it were not vicious and ſo not ſenſible of its own horrid guilt and wickedneſs and its obnoxiouſneſs to this God above, neither then would it be ſuperſtitious; but when it is thus ſenſible of a great and juſt God, which is the avenger of ſuch crimes as it knows it has been highly guilty of, this is the firſt thing that brings it to ſuperſtition, becauſe in the

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2. Second place this cauſes a dreadfull fear and terrible apprehenſion of God upon it; its own guilt ſcares and affrights it and draws terrible Ideas and Images of God upon its mind, ſo that it looks upon him only as a Malefactor does upon his ſevere Judge, his Jailor, or his Executioner: it ſees nothing but frowns in his face, and anger in his eyes, and Thunder and Lightning in his hand, and fancies all the Inſtrumenes of Torture and Puniſhment ready to be applied to it; And in ſuch a caſe as this is, what would it not do to pacifie and appeaſe this Deity that it thus dreads? what a dreadfull fright and paſſion muſt it be in, when it can think of nothing that will do it? how will it be trying every thing it can think of? *Come before his altars and bring thouſands of rams, and ten thouſand rivers of oyl*, if it were rich enough, *and give its firſt born for its tranſgreſſion, and part with the fruit of its own body for the ſin of its ſoul*, Micah 6. 7. and ſhed its own blood for to make ſome expiation for its guilt? Nothing is ſo mean and ſervile, nothing ſo cruel and bloody, ſo ſhamefull and ſcandalous, but a Soul overwhelmed with a ſuperſtitious fear, will be attempting and trying, be it never ſo unagreeable to the Divine Nature, and never ſo unfit and unſuitable to pleaſe him: there is juſt ground

ground of being afraid of God, when we are ſenſible of our guilt, and 'tis not this is ſuperſtition; but when this fear puts Men upon foolish and undue, and abominable ways to appeaſe him, and gives us ſuch a dreadfull Idea and Apprehenſion of him as quite excludes all the thoughts of his Goodneſs and Mercy, and puts the mind only into an exceſſive fright and fit of horror, then it is ſo. I cannot think that ever mankind would have formed ſuch a conception of God, had not their guilt been the medium, thro' which they beheld him; there is nothing in the Divine Nature should cauſe this ſuperſtitious dread of him, nor draw him in ſuch black and ghaſtly features as theſe are; but no wonder that God looks very terrible to a very wicked and a very guilty mind; eſpecially in the

3. Third place, when it is ignorant of any true and certain way to pleaſe or appeaſe God, to procure his favour or avert his anger, which is the other cauſe of ſuperſtition; the ſuperſtitious are a ſort of timerous perſons that are always in the dark, where they have frightfull Images always before them, and black and ghaſtly apparitions riſe up in their fancies, and they know not which way to turn themſelves, nor how to avoid the furies and ſpectres of their own thoughts; They cannot

cannot tell how to deliver themſelves from this ſad ſtate, and thus anxious and perplexed, they apply themſelves to any Saint or any Dæmon, be it good or bad, that they are told can help them; they run to the altar, and throw on any thing that may free 'em from punishment: like perſons in a Tempeſt, they'll part with their richeſt goods to ſave themſelves; they'll perform every Rite and go through every Myſtery, and undergo any kind of Pennance; they'll whip themſelves and walk bare-foot, and run to the ſhrines of any Saint; and whatever ſuperſtitious ignorance ſhall adviſe 'em to, this they'll comply withal, and all out of great fear and ſilly ignorance, and not knowing what it is that will truly recommend 'em to Heaven and procure the Divine favour. And therefore as to the Cure of ſuperſtition, which is the laſt thing I am to ſpeak to, I account a right knowledge of Religion, and a true conception of the Divine Nature to be the cure and remedy for ſuperſtition; and by this way our bleſſed Saviour, who came to deſtroy all ſuperſtition and falſe worship out of the World, has moſt effectually accomplish'd his deſign, by aſſuring us that God is a Being of infinite Goodneſs and Compaſſion to his Creatures, who is not apt to be angry nor provoked with little matters, and

who

who is very placable and willing to be reconciled whenever we have done a great fault that truly offends him; who is not a peevish and angry Master whom it is impossible to please, but a kind and gentle Father whom nothing but willfull disobedience and impudent undutifullness will anger and displease; who tho' he is not a soft and easie Being, who is to be flattered with shows, and imposed upon by little tricks and sorry performances; yet we may be sure to oblige him by being honest and sincere and doing what lies in our power; who, tho' we have a great many imperfections and a great many frailties, yet will accept whatever we offer him in the integrity of our hearts; and will not be extreme or severe to mark what is done amiss, or take advantage of the unavoidable failures of Human Nature: who is so far from that, that he has provided a certain remedy for our most wilfull miscarriages, and declared himself ready to pardon the most hainous offences of the greatest sinners upon the most equitable and gracious terms that can be desired. Such a representation of God and the Divine nature, as this is which Christianity has given us, is enough to banish all superstitious fear and unreasonable dread of him; this will remove all that anxious and

and perplexing aſtoniſhment, which we might otherwiſe be oppreſt withal, when we look'd up to an Almighty power above us, and were uncertain how he would deal with us, and would not tell by what ways we ſhould either purchaſe his good will or avoid his diſpleaſure. Now we know very certainly how we may do that, by living vertuouſly, and obſerving the eternal Laws of Goodneſs and Righteouſneſs, by a hearty penitence for all our paſt faults, and a ſincere obedience for the time to come; by living up to the excellent rules of the Goſpel, and the excellent Example of our Bleſſed Maſter. By a true underſtanding and an honeſt practice of the Chriſtian Religion, we ſhall be delivered from all the fears and uncertainties, from all the darkneſs and ignorance of ſuperſtition; and that we may be ſo, I ſhall add further two Rules or Advices to this purpoſe.

1. Let us bring our minds truly to love God: This the ſuperſtitious perſon does not, he is afraid of God and trembles at the thoughts of him, as a Slave does at the ſight of his mercileſs Patron; but he wiſhes there were no ſuch being as he fanſies God to be, and it would be the moſt joyfull thing in the World if he could get out of his irreſiſtible power. He finds indeed that is impoſſible, and ſo he crouches to

him, as a Captive does to his Insolent Conqueror, that has him in Chains and leads him in Triumph tyed to his Chariot Wheels; but he hates him in his heart even while he prays to him; and when he bows the most submissively before him, his heart within rises up against him, and there he curses him, whilst he flatters him with his lips. Such a black and dismal apprehension the superstitious person has of God, whom he fansies to be a cruel, severe, angry, touchy Being, an Almighty power without goodness; which is to make him an infinite evil, instead of a good, and an Almighty Tyrant, instead of a Righteous God. This makes it impossible for him to love him; he may worship him, but 'tis as *Plutarch* says, some saluted those Tyrants and built Statues to them whom they would have killed and dethroned, had it been in their power; he may come to the Temple, but as he says, 'tis as if it were to the nests of Dragons, or the Caves of wild Beasts, for he imagines the God that dwells there to be as hurtfull and mischievous as any of those, only more powerfull, and he has just such a conception of him, as the *Indians* of the Devil whom yet they worship. I know no greater blasphemy to the Divine Nature, than to conceive thus of it, as the superstitious person doth; nor no

no worſe Idolatry than to ſet up ſuch an Idol of fear and terror in our Souls, inſtead of the great and good God. I will not ſay as ſome do, that Atheiſm is better than this, to deny a God than to think thus ill of him; but this is certain that the ſuperſtitious would be an Atheiſt if he durſt, and 'tis much againſt his Will, his Wiſhes, and his Inclinations, to believe there is a God; and therefore to prevent all ſuperſtitious and undue fear of God, let us avoid all ſuch falſe notions and miſapprehenſions of him, as will make it impoſſible for us to love him.

2. Let us love and practice Vertue and Goodneſs, and only by that means hope to commend our ſelves to God, and fit our ſelves for Heaven, and ſo we ſhall avoid moſt of the little tricks, the cheats and devices of ſuperſtition; the deſign of thoſe is to ſuperſede honeſt Vertue and inward Goodneſs, and by ſome other ways to think to purchaſe the Divine Favour and the Happineſs of Heaven. 'Tis very hard and difficult to men to be inwardly good and exactly vertuous, to drive out every known ſin, and live in the practice of every duty, which is the plain and the honeſt path-way to Heaven; and therefore ſuperſtition would find out other by-roads and eaſier paſſages, and would have Religion lie in more eaſie and outward per-

formances; and would relieve it ſelf againſt that ſtrait and narrow way, which the Goſpel directs us to, and would have it ſuffice to be ſent to Heaven by an Abſolution or an Indulgence. Thus by a Paſs, as it were, by the Prieſt or Pope to the other World, by making a ſhort Confeſſion, and being a little contrite and abſolved and anointed on the Death-Bed, the work is quickly done, and as well he thinks as if the Man had lived a Saint, or died a Martyr; or if he had been ſo Religious in his life time, as to tell over his Beads every day, and carry a Crucifix always about him, and perform the Pennance of his Confeſſor, and gone a few Pilgrimages to a few Saints, then he has done ſuch works as are very meritorious, tho' his Saviour never Commanded one of them; and he muſt be thought to be very Religious, tho' 'tis ſuch a Religion as the Goſpel is a perfect ſtranger to. But Superſtition is for placing Religion in ſome other things than the Goſpel does, in ſome inventions of its own, in ſome little and eaſie and trifling performances, in ſome of the externals and ſhadows of Religion; in a ſtrict obſervance of ſome leſſer duties, and a zealous concern for inconſiderable matters, in being over forward for the little adjuncts and appendages of Religion, but very negligent

gent of that, which is the true life and ſubſtance of it; and in vainly believing to pleaſe God by ſome other things than by a righteous and good mind, and the practice of univerſal Holineſs. Thus did the *Jews* think that often waſhing their Hands would make their Souls clean; that to obſerve the leſſer duties of the Law and the Rites and Traditions of their Elders, was the way to render them extraordinary Holy and Religious, though they foully neglected the weightier duties of Judgment, Mercy and Truth. Superſtition will often overdo in ſome parts of Religion, and therefore puts on the face of greater ſanctity, and is a kind of exceſs in Religion; but 'tis at the bottom a great defect, a want of true and inward goodneſs, and it would ſupply that defect by other ſhows and appearances, and a mighty zeal in little things; it would compound as it were with Heaven, and commute its ſorry and worthleſs performances for actions of true and ſubſtantial goodneſs: It always lays too much value upon the little things of Religion, and does but little eſteem and not heartily love Morality and inward Goodneſs; and therefore the trueſt principle to free us from all ſuperſtitious follies and miſtakes in Religion, is this, That nothing will pleaſe God, but being truly and inwardly

wardly good; that nothing will commend us to his favour, but a Vertuous Mind and a Holy Life, and the ſincere practice of all the moral ſubſtantial duties of Religion; and that without thoſe all other little things in Religion will be vain and idle and inſignificant, which is the trueſt principle in the World, and the beſt preſervative againſt Superſtition.

THE

The Eleventh Sermon.

ACTS XXVI. 8.

Why ſhould it be thought a thing incredible with you, that God ſhould raiſe the dead?

THE Reſurrection of the dead is an Article of our Faith, of that weight and importance, that as it confirms and ſtrengthens all natural Religion, (for if Mens bodies riſe, moſt undoubtedly there is a future State) ſo it is the very Baſis and Foundation of Chriſtianity, without which our Faith in Chriſt is, as the Apoſtle ſays, vain and ungrounded. It ſeems not ſo neceſſary indeed for the truth of Religion

in general, to believe the Reſurrection of the fleſh or body, ſince the Soul without that may be capable of Happineſs or Miſery in another ſtate; and the belief of this alone may be ſufficient to the deſigns of Vertue and Religion: But Chriſtianity lays a very great ſtreſs upon it, makes the Reſurrection of the body as neceſſary and fundamental an Article upon ſome accounts, as the immortality of the ſoul; and this becauſe of the Reſurrection of our Bleſſed Saviour, which as 'tis the great demonſtration of the truth of our Religion, ſo it is an Argument of the Reſurrection of all other Humane Bodies; for if he be riſen again with the ſame Body, with which he lived, and with that is gone into the Heavens, it's fit we ſhould follow him thither with our bodies too, with our whole Humane Nature, which he was pleaſed not only to aſſume upon Earth, but to carry up to be an Inhabitant of the manſions above; if he our head be raiſed, we his Members muſt be raiſed with him; he the firſt fruits from the dead, has by his Reſurrection Conſecrated our Bodies to Life and Immortality. It would be very ſtrange if he ſhould carry his Humane Body into Heaven, were there no others of the ſame nature to follow him, ſo that as the Apoſtle argues, 1 *Cor.* 15. 13. *If there*

there be no Reſurrection of the dead then is Chriſt not riſen. It does therefore highly concern us to maintain and defend this main poſt, and ſtrongeſt hold of our Religion, by which our Chriſtianity muſt either ſtand or fall; and that the more, becauſe Infidelity and Irreligion is moſt apt to be making its attempts and aſſaults upon it in this place, the weakeſt as is ſuppoſed which belongs to it, and to repreſent this article above all others, as an impoſſible and incredible thing. There were found not only among the *Athenians* ſome of the Sect of *Epicurus* probably, who when they heard of the Reſurrection mocked at it, *Acts* 17. 32. and *Pliny*, I remember, reckons it among one of the things that exceed the power of God, *revocare defunctos*; but even amongſt the *Jews*, there were ſome known to St. *Paul*, who thought it a thing unreaſonable and unfit to be believed, to whom he directs himſelf in this his defence of Chriſtianity; the Sadduces were a numerous and prevailing Sect among them, who ſay there is no Reſurrection, neither Angel nor Spirit, *Acts* 23. 8. There are too many of their mind in our days, who cannot believe or conceive any ſpiritual or immaterial ſubſtances; and who cannot think that a body after it has been dead, and lain rotting ſo many hundred

dred or thouſand years, and been diſperſed into ten thouſand atoms, and ſcattered into as many different places, and had a thouſand other bodies made out of it, that this ſhould be brought together again and riſe the ſame body it was before. Againſt theſe modern Sadduces and Unbelievers, theſe pretenders to Reaſon and Philoſophy, who expoſe the articles of revealed Religion, and eſpecially this of the Reſurrection, I ſhall endeavour to vindicate Chriſtianity, and to make good St. *Paul*'s queſtion to them of old, *Why ſhould it be thought a thing incredible that God ſhould raiſe the dead*; or what that queſtion plainly implys, The Reſurrection is not in it ſelf an incredible thing. And this I ſhall do by theſe following conſiderations.

1. There are a great many other things which we ſee and know to be true and have no manner of doubt of, which if we conſider and endeavour to give account of them, they ſeem as puzling and difficult to our reaſon as the Reſurrection.

2. If we take in the almighty power and infinite Wiſdom of God, this will remove all the difficulty and incredibility that ſeems to be in the Reſurrection.

3. We

3. We muſt take in this, the power and wiſdom of God, or elſe we cannot be able to give account not only of the Reſurrection, but not of any the moſt common and ordinary appearance in nature.

4. Our not knowing the particular uſes and purpoſes that our bodies ſhall ſerve for after they are raiſed, ſhould not make the Reſurrection incredible to us.

5. If we conſider how far the body which is raiſed, is to be the ſame with that which is buried and corrupted, we ſhall not think it ſo incredible that God ſhould raiſe the dead.

1. There are a great many other things, *&c.* Theſe unbelieving *Sadduces* and wary *Philoſophers*, who dare not let their thoughts go beyond viſible nature, nor ſtep any thing farther into revelation than reaſon ſhall guide and go along with them, may yet find a great many things there as puzling and unaccountable as the Reſurrection, and which they would think as incredible too, were they not common and frequent; They cannot imagine how a body when it has been corrupted many years and turned into duſt, and all its parts ſeparated and divided, and mixt with a great many other things, ſhould have all thoſe again united and brought together into the ſame vital frame and lively *Compages*: and can they imagine how this body of theirs could

could be formed at first, and have all its various and different parts made out of a principle as unlikely for an humane body to rise out of at first, as out of the dust afterwards? Can they comprehend how the *Pullus* or Chick should be hatch'd out of the Egg, how the *Colliquamentum* should be set on moving, and the *Cicatricula* begin the first race of life? and what should guide the unthinking matter to draw every vital part without any error? and besides, all other things how Bones, and Claws, and Feathers should grow out of a mere fluid? As well one would think might we conceive a Ship with its Keel, Sails and all its Tackling to be made out of the Water, in which it floats; and the strongest Castles to be built, if not in the air, yet out of it, as all the strong and solid parts of an Animals Body, its Bones, and Muscles, and Cartilages to be formed as they are. Thou *who thinkest it incredible for a dead and corrupted body to arise again, thou wouldst think it as incredible to have any animals body formed as it is, if there were not every day a thousand instances of it. Thou who knowest not how that can be done, knowest as little what is the way of the spirit*, as the wise man speaks, *Eccles.* 11. 5. or how life is first given to the Embryo, or how the Bones do grow in the Womb: Nay thou

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as little knoweſt the manner how this body of ours can be nouriſhed and repaired; how that which is in continual flux by perſpiration, and has ſome of its parts dying as it were and departing every moment, ſo that we are not the ſame in a leſs time than every ſeven years; how this ſhould be made new, and the Milky Chyle repair all the waſted parts of the Body, and conſequently be turned into Bones and Sinews, it's not eaſie to account even for this daily Reſurrection, as it were, and continual reſtoring of our decaying bodies. But I need ſend theſe doubters and unbelievers of the Reſurrection, only to that Emblem of it which the Apoſtle has given, 1 *Cor.* 15. that of Corn ſown or buried in the ground, which ſeems there firſt to die and corrupt, and then it paſſes through abundance of alterations, ſhoots into a ſtringy root and graſſy top, grows into a ſtem, a ſtalk, an ear, and ſome of the leaſt of Seeds waxes a great Tree, ſo that the Fowls of the air may lodge in the branches of it; and yet theſe after they are ſo altered and quite loſt, one would think in the various Metamorphoſes they have paſſed thro'; have every Seed its own body given it again, as the Apoſtle expreſſes it, 1 *Cor.* 15. 37. and riſe as it were again the very ſame ſort and ſpecies, tho' it be mixt with

with a thouſand others. This ſeems almoſt as ſtrange, if we reflect upon it, as the Reſurrection of our bodies after all their corruptions and alterations; and it might be thought as incredible too, if it were not frequent and familiar to us: As there are a great many appearances in nature, which tho' common and unregarded; yet to thoſe who are ſtrangers to them, they ſeem impoſſible and no way to be believed. The works of God and Nature have ſo much of wonder in them beyond all humane Conception and Underſtanding, that if they were not daily before our Eyes, we ſhould think them as incredible as thoſe difficult matters which ſome complain of in Revelation. But I need offer but one *Phænomenon* of Nature, to repreſent the Reſurrection by.

And that is that Revolution of Nature which we call the Spring, which is the general Reſurrection as it were of terreſtrial nature; in which after it has grown old and hoary in Winter, dead as it were and ſtiff with cold, and every part of it was ſhrunk, and crept into its grave, and been lock'd up there as in a cold Sepulchre, yet how in the ſpring does it recover life again? how is a vigorous warmth diffuſed into it? and how on a ſudden is all the beauty and gayety, all the ſtrength

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and vigor, the health and fruitfullneſs of youth beſtowed upon it? every Plant and Herb and Flower, revives and flouriſhes and puts on as it were a new and glorious body, and yet every one its own body. And how this ſhould be, and how every dry tree ſhould bloom and bloſſom and have life and ſap conveyed to its withered branches, and the ſame juice turned into leaves and buds and fruit of ſo many kinds; This ſeems as ſtrange as how dry Bones ſhould live, and how fleſh and ſinews ſhould again come upon a Skeleton, *Ezek.* 37. 8. and all we, who daily ſee theſe wonderfull things before our Eyes, theſe conſtant Miracles of Nature, which if we conſider and endeavour to give account of, are as puzling and difficult as the Reſurrection; *Why ſhould it be thought a thing incredible* with us and eſpecially with any curious ſearcher of Nature, *that God ſhould raiſe the dead?*

2. If we take in the almighty Power and Wiſdom of God, this will remove all the difficulty and incredibility that ſeems to be in the thing: So that the very firſt principle of Religion will make all the difficulty of the Reſurrection vaniſh; the conſidering that there is an infinite Being who has power ſufficient to do every thing that implies not a contradiction, and is not in the nature of the thing utterly im-

impoſſible or contrary to ſome ſtanding and fundamental principle of truth and certainty, nor does any way reflect upon his other perfections of Wiſdom, Juſtice and Goodneſs; this will make the whole thing very eaſie to us: for how eaſie will it be to him who put every part of matter into that regular order that conſtitutes the Heavens above and earth below, and all Plants and Animals that are upon it, he who founded the Earth by his power and ſtretched out the Heavens by his underſtanding as the Scripture ſpeaks: *He who telleth the number of the Stars, and calleth them all by their names*, as the *Pſalmiſt* expreſſes it, *Pſ.* 147. 4. He who made and moved and knows, and permeates every part of matter that is in the vaſt Creation, and ranks and orders it in its due place; how cannot he put and bring together all the ſcattered parts of our dead bodies? He from whom our ſubſtance was not hid when we were *made in ſecret, and curiouſly wrought in the loweſt parts of the Earth*, Pſam. 139. 15. *whoſe Eyes did ſee our ſubſtance, yet being unperfect, and in whoſe Book were all our members written, which in continuance were faſhioned when as yet there was none of them*, *v.* 16. how cannot he alſo as eaſily know and rejoin all the parts and members of our corrupted bo-

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dles ; He by whom the very hairs of our heads are numbred, how eaſie will it be for him to know the body of every man, and every part and Member of that body ; he who gives life to every little Creature, and to thoſe innumerable Animals that are in the World ; who preſerves ſo many thouſand Eſſences by a continual influx derived from himſelf, and has millions of Angels and other Souls, who live and move and have their ſeveral beings in him : In a word, he who made and preſerves all things by a word of his mouth, and needs nothing but the mere willing of a thing to make it ; how *great is* this *our Lord and of great power* ; *his underſtanding is infinite*, Pſal. 147. 5. and he can do any thing that implyes not a contradiction, nor is contrary to the reaſon and nature of things, nor contrary to his own other perfections of Wiſdom, Juſtice and Goodneſs, as I ſhall ſhow briefly the Reſurrection is not. 1. Then there is no incapacity in the ſubject, nor no contradiction in the nature of the thing to make the Reſurrection incredible: A dead body is no more uncapable of life than a body at reſt is of motion, or than a torch put out is of being kindled again ; and the ſoul may as well be united to it afterwards, as is was at firſt. It may be brought into it when raiſed from the Grave, by the ſame Laws of the

Univerſe, or the ſame vital Congruity by which it came into it, when it was firſt formed; and every ſoul may as well be directed to its own body then, as it was before: the greateſt difficulty in the ſubject is this, That the parts of the body are ſo ſcattered and divided in ſeveral places, and made the parts perhaps of other bodies, that its hard to conceive how they ſhould all come together and be united to their proper bodies; but tho' they are ſcattered they are not loſt; every Atom, be it never ſo ſmall, is ſtill to be found in the vaſt maſs of matter: and whatever alterations it may have paſt thro', yet has its being and ſubſiſtence ſome where in the World, and ſo may with Power and Wiſdom be put together again; like the many little pins and ſmall pieces of a great Machine, tho' they are all taken to pieces and miſplaced, yet they may all be ſet together again by a skilfull hand. Every part of matter is pervaded and fill'd with a ſpirit that governs all its motions and knows the minuteſt particles of it, and can range and order them as it pleaſeth, and there is nothing hid from the power thereof: There is not the leaſt appearance of a contradiction for a thing that was deſtroyed or diſperſed to become the ſame it was before; it ſeems nothing ſo hard

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as for a thing to be that was not before. So that the Reſurrection cannot be thought by any ſo incredible as the Creation, and he that is but a Theiſt and owns natural Religion, cannot with reaſon ſtick or boggle at this Article of Revelation, and he that believes an Almighty Power, could make all things out of nothing, need not doubt his power to make a thing what it was before.

2. Neither is the Reſurrection contrary to any certain principle of truth, which the God of truth has eſtabliſhed in the nature and reaſon of things; if it were, it could be no object of Divine power, for God's power muſt not deſtroy the truth of things; there are certain principles of truth and knowledge which muſt be kept inviolable, or elſe we run into boundleſs Scepticiſm, and can never know any thing to be true or falſe: and therefore we muſt not call in the Almighty power to deſtroy thoſe, as the Papiſts do in Tranſubſtantiation, which muſt be as certainly falſe as we can know any thing to be certainly true; ſo that neither infallibility can uphold it, nor infinite power effect it, without deſtroying thoſe certain principles by which we can know any thing to be true; by deſtroying the nature and properties of a body; by making the whole no greater

than a part; by taking away all evidence of ſenſe about its proper objects, and if we remove thoſe we have no way left to know whether any thing be true or falſe. But the Reſurrection is no way liable to any ſuch abſurdities, nor is it in the leaſt contrary to any certain and natural principles of truth; for then it would be not only incredible but abſolutely falſe, and impoſſible to be true: no Article of Chriſtian Faith is or can be ſo, but as we ſay, tho' it be above our reaſon, yet is not againſt it. The bleſſed Trinity in Unity, tho' it be of another nature, of an infinite and incomprehenſible being, which may communicate it ſelf in ſuch a manner as we know not; yet however it be too big for our Conception, is not contradictory to any thing we certainly know to be true; and tho' it be an Idea by it ſelf it deſtroys none of thoſe Idea's we have of other things.

3. That the Reſurrection is no way inconſiſtent with any of the Divine perfections (which are the bounds alſo which the Divine power can never violate) is ſo plain, that it rather ſeems to follow and be fairly inferred from them; for what more agreeable to Gods goodneſs than as that he gave us our Souls at firſt, and put thoſe Souls into curious and well framed bodies, which are the other part of

of Humane Nature, which makes us to be Men and Beings of ſuch a rank and order in the Creation; ſo that he ſhould continue the ſame entire nature to us, as long as he is pleaſed to continue us in being. It wou'd be a charge methinks upon the Wiſdom of God, that he ſhould give Man ſo curious a body above any other Creatures, and yet ſuffer that to continue and laſt a much ſhorter time than the bodies of many other, not only Animals, but Plants and Trees do; if he did not deſign that this noble fabrick ſhould be rebuilt and repaired again after death; and that the Soul ſhould have a longer term of aboad in it afterwards and in reverſion, than it enjoys in this preſent life. It would ſeem ſtrange if theſe two Friends ſhould be ſo cloſely and intimately united here, but for a few days if they were not to meet again and dwell together for ever; and that God ſhould make us of ſuch a compound nature in this life, and of a quite other nature in the next, this would not be to keep that wiſe order and regular courſe of things that he does in the whole Syſtem of the Creation. As to the Divine Juſtice, that ſeems to be more exactly anſwered by raiſing the ſame bodies, (without which, we are hardly the ſame perſons) *that every one may receive in his*

body according to that he has done, whether it be good or bad, as the Apoſtle ſpeaks, 2 *Cor.* 5. 10. that not only the ſame Souls, but the ſame Bodies, which have either glorified God by Suffering or any other Vertue, or have been the Inſtrument of any ſin, ſhould be glorified or tormented in another World; and that the whole of Humane Nature, and not only a part of it, which the Soul is, ſhould be made capable of the everlaſting rewards and puniſhments that are proper to it. The Reſurrection then is every way conſiſtent with the perfections of the Divine Nature, and is no way contrary to any natural principle of truth, nor implys any contradiction in it; and therefore is a proper object of God's Almighty Power, and, by the help of that, may be eaſily effected and accounted for.

4. And without this power of God nothing elſe can be effected in nature; we muſt take in this, not only to give an account of the Reſurrection, but of every thing elſe we ſee done before us, and of every effect and appearance in the viſible World: how we were made at firſt and how our bodies were formed, is as perfectly unaccountable without taking in the Divine Power and Wiſdom, as how we ſhall riſe again; and ſo is every other Myſtery of nature, if we well conſider

ſider it, and follow and trace it thro' all ſecond cauſes, it will neceſſarily bring us to the firſt; and we muſt reſolve all at laſt into the Power and Wiſdom of that. How we move our bodies by the thought of our minds, we know no more than how God ſhall raiſe them; what directs the ſpirits into ſuch Tracts and Muſcles, and by what pullies they draw up the heavy parts, is ſo admirable a Mechaniſm that it requires the ſame Divine Wiſdom as to raiſe the dead; how we live, how we think, and how we ſpeak, is to a Philoſopher as curious and as ſecret as how we ſhall riſe: every thing indeed is ſo in the Volume of Nature, which has the plaineſt Characters of Divine Power and Wiſdom every where writ upon it, as being to teach every one that there is a God. To look upward we ſee the Sun ſhines, but can we tell what light is, or how it ſtreams from the Sun to our Eye? how ſuch a maſs of fire ſhould ſo long hold together without being quenched or leſſened? do we know how the Stars are fixt to their Orbs? how thoſe gliſtering gemms are ſet and faſtned to the fluid firmament? can we imagine what Pillars there are, upon which the Earth is founded, and what it is ſupports the heavy Globe, and keeps it from ſinking? what it is that poizes, and makes it ſwim

in the liquid Æther, and keeps it at ſo juſt and exact a diſtance from the heavenly Bodies, ſo as to be neither frozen nor burnt up? and can we be able to know what it is makes their motions ſo regular and harmonious, ſo uſefull and ſerviceable to the World? what guides their mighty bodies in ſuch even Tracts? what draws the crooked Zodiac for the Sun or Earth to move in? and keeps the violent and rapid matter from going on in an infinite ſtreight line, or ſome other way ſallying and running out of order? Can any man, who juſtly conſiders theſe things, give any account of them without a wiſe God and Almighty Intelligence? not only a *Sparrow cannot fall to the ground without our Heavenly Father*, as our Saviour ſpeaks, *Matth.* 10. 29. but not a ſtone can fall thither, nor a ſpark fly upwards, however neceſſary and natural that be, without, ſuch a frame and ſuch laws of matter and motion as nothing but a wiſe Being can eſtabliſh or cauſe to be obſerved. Why matter is thus figured and diſpoſed, and why ſuch effects come from it we cannot tell; as why graſs is green, blood red, and not the quite contrary: as we cannot of our ſelves make one hair white or black, as our Saviour ſaith, ſo neither can we tell why it is ſo; but every Phænomenon muſt at laſt be reſolved into the

the Will and Wiſdom of the firſt cauſe, and thither all true Philoſophy muſt bring us; and the ſame Divine Power is requir'd in every the moſt common effect of Nature, as in the Reſurrection. But,

5. Our not fully knowing the uſes and deſigns our bodies ſhall ſerve for after they are rais'd, ſhould not make the Reſurrection incredible to us: What uſe, ſome ſay will there be of the body in another World when the Soul alone is capable of the rewards of it? I anſwer who can tell but the body may be of extraordinary uſe to us in another World? perhaps it is a neceſſary part of Humane Nature, and we are not our whole ſelves without it; perhaps the Soul is never to be quite naked and wholly ſtript of all matter and bodily indowment, and that it is cloathed with a thinner Vehicle when it puts off the thicker and groſſer fleſh: perhaps no Beings in the World but God himſelf are to be pure ſpirits, which was a very ancient opinion of ſome wiſe Men; perhaps the Angels themſelves have material veſtures of a flaming fire, and a reſplendent brightneſs as they uſed always to appear; and if the Human Souls are not to be uncloathed but *cloathed upon with our houſe which is from Heaven*, 2 *Cor.* 5. 2. What more fit than that the materials of this houſe ſhould be taken out of its former body,

body, tho' greatly improved and advanced, as I ſhall ſhow immediately? who can tell what proper pleaſures God ſhall fit for our bodies, and make them ſuch noble Organs for the Soul as ſhall be mighty uſeful to it? and who knows whether that can enjoy all that alone without the body as with it, and that there is not ſome new faculty or ſatisfaction reſulting from its animating and being united to a body, the Scripture repreſenting the happineſs of the other ſtate not to be compleat till the general Reſurrection? God alone can tell what faculties and powers are fit for his Creatures in any ſtate; and while we are in this, we can know no more what is proper for us in the other, than an Embryo not yet born can conceive what it ſhall need when it comes into the world: were it not abſolutely neceſſary, yet it ſeems very agreeable to Juſtice, to have both the body and ſoul that were partners in Sin or Vertue, to be ſharers in the rewards of it. And if Chriſt the Captain of our Salvation is to be perfect Man as well as perfect God in Heaven, and his glorious body is probably to be the viſible Shechinah of Heaven it ſelf; the bodies of all good Chriſtians ought to riſe and attend him, and be partakers with him of the ſame Glory, that ſo human Nature even in its weakeſt and fraileſt part may eternally

nally triumph over death and the grave, and over him who had the power of both.

5. And Laſtly, To take off the incredibility of the Reſurrectionn, let us conſider how far the body that is raiſed is to be the ſame with that which is buried and corrupted. We muſt not be too rigorous and exact in inſiſting upon the ſame body; if we be, we cannot be ſaid to have the ſame body two days together: Our bodies are always in flow, and ſeveral parts of them are always going off by inſenſible Tranſpiration, and others come in the place of them; like a River, we call it the ſame, tho' its Water be always running and paſſing away, and ſcarce any drop of it be exactly the ſame the next Tide: or as we call that the ſame flame of a Candle all the while it is burning, which yet is waſted every moment and ſupplied with other new parts of oyl; ſo we have the ſame body in our old Age that we had in our Youth. And this very body of ours that was ſome time animated by our Souls, that this ſhall riſe again the Scripture is too plain to have it denied, as it is by the *Socinians*; the very word Reſurrection, ſuppoſes it to be in ſome ſenſe the ſame body; and they which riſe again are ſaid to be the ſame that were aſleep, and lay in their graves: ſo that if we had quite another new body

dy given us at the day of Judgment, this might be ſaid to be new made or created, but not to riſe again. But yet it is not neceſſary that every part of matter which made up this Body of ours at our Death, and was buried in the ſame Grave, ſhould go to the making up of our raiſed bodies. It is ſufficient if this Earthly body of ours which we had in this World, be the ſeed or ſeminal body as it were of the Reſurrection body, out of ſome part of which it is as truly raiſed, as the new Corn or Fruit is out of the Corn or Kernell which was ſet or ſowed; ſo the Apoſtle gives us an account of the Reſurrection, 1 *Cor.* 15. 36, 37, 38. in anſwer to that queſtion, *How are the dead raiſed up? or with what bodies do they come? i. e.* how are thoſe whoſe parts have been ſo variouſly mixt with other bodies, and turned into the ſubſtance perhaps of other men, whoſe very bodies are again to be raiſed, how ſhall every part of theſe men be raiſed up; when perhaps ſeveral men might have parts of the ſame body, and therefore in the Reſurrection whoſe body ſhall it be, ſince many had ſome of it to be their body? and with what body ſhall every one come, if it muſt be exactly the ſame, and yet that is ſo very hard, if not ſome time impoſſible? To this the Apoſtle anſwers, *Thou Fool, that*

that which thou ſoweſt, is not quickned except it die: and that which thou ſoweſt, thou ſoweſt not that body which ſhall be, but bare Grain, it may chance of Wheat or ſome other Grain: But God giveth it a body as it hath pleaſed him, and to every ſeed his own body: God does give every Man his own body, but not ſo exactly the ſame, as not to be at all altered; but as a building is the ſame which is repaired, tho' with a great many other materials; and as an ear of Corn is the ſame with its ſeed, tho' it has taken in a good quantity of the moiſture of the Earth, and turned it into its own body. Thoſe who have curiouſly examined the Anatomy of Plants and Seeds, tell us, that in the little Gemm or Eye of the Seed is contained the whole draught and the perfect *Stamina* of the Plant, with its bark and leaves, and fruit, and all the lines of it exactly drawn in little, which are after to be fill'd up and extended by the heat of the Sun, and moiſture of the Earth. And if ſo little a ſeed or kernel can contain all the parts of a large ſtalk or great tree, who knows how much of our preſent bodies may be ſufficient to raiſe the ſame bodies out of again? and how ſmall a part of this corruptible matter may be the Embryo, as it were, of our Heavenly bodies? It is certain theſe our

bodies

bodies ſhall be ſo much altered, that that *which is ſown in corruption, ſhall be raiſed in incorruption; and that which is now a natural body ſhall be then a ſpiritual*; not that it ſhall be turned into a ſpirit, and loſe its corporeal nature; but that it ſhall be refined and made pliable to the Soul and Spirit, and to all its motions, and ſtand in no need of thoſe things that belong to the animal life. And yet it may ſtill be the ſame body for all thoſe new modes and qualities, as a Jewel is the ſame ſubſtance of the Earth, which was once a common fluid, and is now turned into an Orient Pearl; and the moſt clear Cryſtal Glaſs is the ſame matter that was before Sand and Aſhes. The beſt Philoſophy tells us there is no ſpecifick difference in matter, but it is the ſame in ſubſtance, tho' its outward figure colour and other accidents be altered, which are but ſeveral modifications of the ſame matter; and I can conceive God as eaſily to change theſe our mortal corruptible bodies, into immortal and incorruptible ones, as he turns the ſubſtance that every Animal eats into blood and ſpirits; and the moiſture and filth of the Earth that nouriſhes every flower and fruit into the moſt beauteous colour and moſt delicate taſt. Cannot he give the Soul a ſhining and a glorious body even out of this corruptible one, as well as he

he made the Sun and Stars and all thoſe luminous bodies out of the dark and gloomy Chaos? Cannot he make our bodies to ſhine as the Stars of glory, as well as the Stars themſelves, which, tho' Heavenly bodies, yet are of the ſame ſubſtance with Earthly matter? Cannot he make our bodies which are now a clog and burden to the Soul, to be but like ſo many fiery Chariots to carry us up to Heaven? or like ſo many Wings to move us nimbly where-ever we pleaſe, and fleet us thro' all the Heavenly Regions that are above? Cannot he do this, as well as he has given Wings to the flame, and made that which ariſes out of ſmoak and ſoot to caſt forth rays and luſtre, and mount upwards? The glorified bodies of Men or Angels are generally in Scripture compared to flame and light, their *countenance is* then *like lightning*, *and their raiment white as ſnow*, as the Angel is deſcribed, *Mat.* 28. 3. and, as our Saviour, when his body was transfigured *his face did ſhine as the Sun*, *and his raiment was white as the light*, Mat. 17. 2. and ſo ſhall the bodies of good Men after the Reſurrection, be turned into ſuch pure and glorious bodies, that they ſhall raiſe ſplendour and beauty all about them; which tho' it be a great tranſmutation, yet by many the like inſtances I have given,

ven, is neither impoſſible nor incredible to conceive. The bodies indeed of wicked Men will be very much altered and loſe their animal and mortal nature, but they will be groſs and heavy and ſink their Souls into the regions of Hell and Darkneſs; they will be like ſo many diſmal and filthy Dungeons to keep the Soul in chains of everlaſting Darkneſs: or, like ſo many poiſoned ſhirts, like that of *Hercules*, that will ſcorch and inflame and torture them beyond expreſſion, and ſticking cloſe to them burn them with poiſonous flames, and fill them with the perpetual ſtench of fire and brimſtone. How the bodies of wicked men may be made the Inſtruments of torment to their Souls, is eaſie to imagine from the exquiſite pains they often give them here; from whence we may conceive how they may be contrived to be the dreadfull racks of eternal death, where the miſerable wretches may be always ſuffering the pains of death without dying; and on which they may be made to lie for ever, raging and gnawing their Tongues for pain, and blaſpheming the God of Heaven, becauſe of their pains and their ſores, to wit, of their bodies, as they are deſcribed, *Revel.* 16. 10. And here I could ſtop, and offer one thought to thoſe who are ſo fond and tender of their bodies here, who are for

for indulging them in every Luſt and every Pleaſure, and think Happineſs lieth in the mere delights of the body; what they will think of having theſe pretious parts, theſe dear bodies thus eternally and exquiſitely tormented for the ſake of a few paultry ſins which are but for a moment: but having defended and confirmed this article of our Chriſtian Faith, the Reſurrection of our bodies, I muſt name but one general uſe of it, and that is, Let us all of us ſo live as if we heartily believed it without making any the leaſt doubt in our minds about it; let no miſts of Infidelity overcaſt this Faith of ours, which as it is certain by Revelation, ſo is far you ſee from being incredible by reaſon, which was the point I was to conſider and make out. It is a great ſatisfaction to eaſe our thoughts from ſome difficulties about it, and have the underſtanding as the eye, ſee things clearly without a film over it. But theſe articles of faith are not only for Contemplation and the Entertainment of our reaſon, but like Principles and Theorems in other Sciences, they are to be made uſe of in practice, and to be drawn out and improved into uſe and action; no truth in Religion, no Article of Faith is worth making out or proving, or ſatisfying our ſelves about, if it be not ſome way or

other uſefull to the practice of Religion, and be not influential to the making us good and vertuous in our lives: but the Reſurrection has ſuch a direct and immediate tendency to do this, as it carries in it the aſſurance of a future ſtate both of Soul and Body, that if we fully believe it and are undoubtedly perſwaded of it, it will do its own work, and will neceſſarily promote Vertue and Religion; and be effectual upon all our lives, did not a ſecret Scepticiſm and Infidelity, which is the Vice of our Age hinder and defeat the power of it: Let the belief of it therefore be firm and unſhaken upon our minds, and let the efficacy of it be powerfull upon our Lives and Converſations; there is nothing more incredible in the thing that our bodies ſhould riſe hereafter than that they were once formed and born: there may be difficulties perhaps equal in the account of both, but as no Man doubts the one, ſo he that well conſiders will have no reaſon to diſ-believe the other, or to think it *incredible that God ſhould raiſe the dead.*

Let it raiſe us to thoughts and to things above, whither Chriſt is raiſed and where he ſits with his glorious body at God's right hand. Let us often aſcend thither in our minds now, whither we hope to aſcend hereafter with our bodies as well

well as our Souls: Let us consider that these Bodies of ours, as well as our Souls, were made for higher designs and better enjoyments then any here of this World, and that they ought to be the subjects of Purity and Vertue now, as they are to be of Happiness hereafter; The Resurrection will raise our minds to a great many noble thoughts, if we throughly consider it and really believe it, and I hope we may be satisfied by what has been said.

The Twelfth Sermon.

HEB. III. 13. latter part.

Leſt any of you be hardned through the deceitfulneſs of ſin.

THE Author of this Epiſtle adviſes in this Chapter, thoſe Jewiſh Chriſtians he wrote to, to take care that they fell not into that ſad ſtate and temper of mind, their forefathers were in in the time of *Moſes*. *Not to harden their hearts now as in the provocation, in the day of temptation in the wilderneſs*, v. 8. when tho' they ſaw the mighty works of God forty years, and had daily Miracles before their Eyes, and were fed and maintained by them, and lived under a conſtant

ſtant diſpenſation of them; yet ſtill a ſpirit of Infidelity and Obſtinacy was amongſt them, and their hearts were hardned and they would not hearken unto God, nor obey his voice; but were kept out of the good Land, by reaſon of their monſtrous and unreaſonable belief: ſo it was alſo in the times of our Saviour, when notwithſtanding all his many Miracles done before their Eyes, they were yet ſo blinded and hardned by their ſins, that they continued Infidels; ſo that the utmoſt, and one would think, irreſiſtible evidence could not prevail upon them. Human Nature is ſtill the ſame it was then, and liable to the ſame corruptions and depravations, and when it has ſuffered its Luſts and Vices, and unreaſonable Inclinations to grow upon it, and have power over it, they will quickly bring Men to a wretched blindneſs of mind and hardneſs of heart; ſo that the beſt evidence for Religion, and the ſtrongeſt arguments and demonſtrations for the Truth, or the practice of it ſhall not prevail upon 'em; but whilſt they indulge themſelves and continue in their ſins, this will corrupt their Minds and deprave their Faculties, darken their Underſtanding, and ſpoil their Judgment, bring them to hardneſs of heart and a reprobate mind, and to groſs and unreaſonable Infidelity, and at laſt to a total

defection

defection and apoſtacy from all Religion: *Take heed therefore*, ſays the Apoſtle, *Leſt there be in any of you an evill heart of unbelief in departing from the living God*, v. 22. and the way to prevent that, was not to be drawn in by any ſin, nor deceived by any Vice or Luſt that ſhould bring 'em to this; but to take a preſent and immediate care to free themſelves from every ſuch ſin, and to perſwade one another to keep cloſe to Religion, and not to give way to any Vice or Wickedneſs deluding them at firſt, or growing afterwards more upon them; *Wherefore exhort one another daily while it is called to day, leſt any of you be hardned through the deceitfulneſs of ſin.* From theſe words I ſhall conſider theſe two things.

1. How ſin deceives at the beginning.

2. How it hardens the mind afterwards.

How it firſt cheats and horribly impoſes upon us, and then how it brings the mind into a more wretched and depraved and hardned ſtate.

1. *Of the deceitfulneſs of ſin.* One would think that either Human Nature were not ſo rationall as we pretend it is, and that this were not our inſeperable property; or elſe that Vice were not ſo fooliſh and unreaſonable, ſo pernicious and deſtructive as we ſuppoſe it to be; when

we look into the ſtate of the World and ſee Vice every where prevailing and abounding, and moſt Men chooſing and preferring it before Vertue; as Men are rational Creatures that act as from principles of Liberty and Judgment, ſo always from an inſtinct of ſelf good and ſelf preſervation which ſeems to be a natural principle that prevents all reaſon, and which we can never with all our choice and freedom act wittingly and willingly againſt. We can never chooſe evil as evil, but under the colour and appearance of good; but our nature is made with an inward ſpring that runs of it ſelf from a naked evil, but always purſues what we apprehend is good for us, what appears to us, as conducing and tending to our Welfare and Happineſs; and therefore we muſt bring Religion and every thing elſe to this, if we would have it fall in with Nature, and be laſtingly and ſurely fixt in our Minds.

But either Vice is not ſo great an evil, ſo deſtructive and contrary to the good Welfare and Happineſs of Humane Nature; or elſe our reaſon muſt be very much cheated and deluded, and impoſed upon, when we are drawn into it; and we muſt be mightily deceived by ſome falſe reaſoning or other about it in our own minds: for there is a ſort of reaſoning

ing and arguing, judging and concluding however ſhort and quick, and precipitate and miſtaken this be, in every moral action we do; and ſome proceſs there is in the mind and thoughts, even when we are led never ſo much by our ſenſes, and act not upon thoughts or reaſon; elſe the action would not be Voluntary or Criminal, or capable either of guilt or blame, as proceeding from a miſuſe of our reaſon and choice, our judgment and freedom.

Our underſtanding and reaſon muſt therefore judge amiſs and be groſly deceived and impoſed on, when, contrary to our good and intereſt, we are drawn into the practice of ſin, and ſeduced by its temptations, and inveigled by the deceitfullneſs of it; for tho' it be againſt our reaſon in one ſenſe, *i. e.* againſt the right uſe of it, yet it carries our reaſon along with it at that time we commit it; and our judgment determines for it at that inſtant, tho' very raſhly and unadviſedly, as we find when we come to conſider it over again. The deceitfulneſs of ſin lies therefore chiefly in theſe following things.

1. In having too high an Opinion, Fancy, and Imagination of thoſe little Goods, Pleaſures, Profits, or whatever preſent ſenſual and worldly Enjoyments any of our ſins may yield to us, or that we can hope

hope to reap by them. These are the three Lusts the Apostle mentions, *Of the Flesh, of the Eye, and the pride of Life*, or rather the objects of those; these are the gilded bait, the fair fruit, the alluring charms and inviting temptations that draw in and inveigle every sinner; for no Man would be wicked or serve the Devil for nought, nor commit any sin out of pure malice to God and Religion, and mere hatred to Vertue; at least not till he is arrived to a very high degree of diabolical wickedness. No, 'tis to purchase and attain some fancied good and imagined pleasure or advantage; something gratefull and desirable to the senses, Appetites and Inclinations of our nature, that tempts and allures us. Now there being a small natural good in many of those sinfull temptations, for such it must be allowed bodily pleasure and worldly profit and other enjoyments are, which therefore good men may desire and partake of within such bounds and limits as are allowed by God and Religion; and those are even the blessings of God's left hand, as the *Jews* phrased them; and it is an unnatural piece of Stoicism, and an Hypocritical affectation to renounce them wholly, and declaim weakly against them. Riches, and Honours, and Pleasures, are Lawfull objects of our desires in some degree

gree, and may have a proper good allowed to them ſuitable to our preſent ſtate and nature, and their contraries may be called evils; elſe it would be no Virtue to deny them, or forgo them in any caſe, nor would have any reward at God's hand; but they are not the great goods our nature was made for, nor thoſe that can make us truly and compleatly happy, tho' we had never ſo many of them; nor are comparatively any goods, becauſe nothing ſo great as Wiſdom and Vertue, as Peace of Mind and Tranquility of Soul, as an inward Senſe of God's Favour, and chearfull hopes of Heaven; theſe will make a Man truly and inwardly happy without or with a very little of the other, and give him the true perfection and happineſs of his nature, and make him eternally bleſſed, when all others are periſhed and gone, and ſignifie nothing.

'Tis an ignorance of the true nature of good and evil in relation to our ſelves, as well as to the World, that is the prime and general cauſe of Mens being deceived into ſin; and the firſt part of its deceitfulneſs, is by the immoderate and falſe Opinion of thoſe little Goods or preſent Enjoyments we may obtain by them; Thus when our Fancies and vain Imaginations repreſent Riches and a great E-

ſtate

ſtate, as the greateſt Good, as the greateſt Security, Credit and Comfort, and what will afford and bring in all other good things of this World; this makes a Man make Riches his God, and put his truſt in 'em, and Sacrifice every thing to Mammon, and uſe any means to attain 'em, becauſe he thinks nothing ſo evil as to be without them, and nothing elſe ſo good as having abundance of them. So another fancies no happineſs like that of being Great and above others, of having the knee and the head, and the outward marks and acknowledgments of ſuperiority given him, or to appear in State and Grandeur with a rich Train, and ſplendid Equipage always attending him; and he deſpiſes poor and contemptible Vertue in reſpect of all this, and thinks as meanly of the greateſt Wiſdom without thoſe, as that does of him; and therefore rather than part with thoſe, he will part with his Conſcience, and change his Religion rather than his place, and will ſtick at nothing either to keep or gain his ambitious Ends and Deſigns. Another who is a Voluptuary, and thinks Pleaſure the *ſummum bonum*, the chiefeſt good he can taſte or feel; he hunts after it thro' all the Scents and Paths of Senſuality, Luxury, Lewdneſs and Debauchery, and either *Bacchus*

or

or *Venus* is the Deity he worſhips; and the greateſt Good and Enjoyment he fancies and imagines, and has an Idea of, is the Wine ſparkling in the Glaſs, or the Charms of Beauty, or the other objects of ſenſual Pleaſure: and by heating his thoughts and inflaming his fancy, his deſires of thoſe things grow impatient, exceſſive and ungovernable. Now if a man had uſed himſelf to conſider ſeriouſly how little there is in all thoſe things, how very little in reſpect of the greater pleaſures of a wiſe and eaſie Mind, a good Conſcience, and the hopes of Religion; and that all the true Pleaſures of Life, that are deſirable to a Wiſe Man, may be otherwiſe enjoyed within the bounds of Vertue; and that the going beyond thoſe is an unavoidable miſchief to himſelf and to the World; and that all thoſe little ſenſual and temporary goods he is ſo fond of, are at beſt but ſhort and tranſitory, empty and unſatisfying things, but poor trifling ſatisfactions, and mere gilded decaying Vanities, that will all quickly periſh and paſs away, ſo that our proper happineſs cannot lie in them. This would give us ſuch true Opinions and right Apprehenſions of all carnal and Worldly things, in which the whole ſtrength and temptations of ſin are placed, as would diſarm and weak-

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en it of all its power, ſtrip it of all its fine dreſs and falſe attire, waſh off all its paint, ſpoil all its beauty and ſhining luſtre, whereby it impoſes upon our vain fancies and weak imaginations; and deceives us with a falſe Opinion of thoſe ſmall Goods, Profits, or Pleaſures it can afford us.

2. We do not at the ſame time compare with thoſe the great evil that is in them, and ſo do not judge rightly and impartially on both ſides, but determine haſtily on one, and ſo are deceived; whereas to make a true Judgment and Eſtimate, we ſhould ſet the evil againſt the good, and ſo weigh the matter, and ſet the balance right between them; but, Alaſs! Men are in too much haſte to do this, when they are ſo hotly and eagerly purſuing their Luſts; when, having the fancied good Pleaſure and Enjoyment of their ſins only in their Eye, they never think or conſider, or take into their accounts the much greater and more numerous and more certain evils that belong to them, and are inſeparably annext to the commiſſion of them; if they did, no Man would ſwallow the thin bait when he ſaw the fatal hook under it; None would eat the forbidden fruit, tho' never ſo fair and pleaſant to the Eye, if he knew and certainly believed that Death

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was its bittter ſauce, and in the day he eat thereof he ſhould die: No Man would drink the ſweeteſt draught, or take down the moſt delicious morſel, if he thought it would kill him. Nature without any great deliberation refuſes immediately, and abhors what it apprehends to be evil, as it is extreamly fond and deſirous of what appears good and agreeable to it; and the fear of the one is perhaps more ſtrong and affecting than the love of the other; as the ſenſe of pain is greater and quicker than that of pleaſure; and therefore did it ſpy the Snake in the Graſs, the Serpent hid under the Bed of Roſes and Violets, it would not be invited by all their beauty and ſweetneſs to lie down upon them; and it would be quickly frighted and run from the tempter, tho' he appear'd as an Angel of light, if it ſaw his Cloven Foot. Vice therefore always uſes art to conceal its worſt ſide, hides its deformity and rottenneſs under a falſe paint and counterfeit colour, and varniſhes over its real evil with the *fucus* of ſome ſeeming good; ſo the unwary ſinner is drawn into its deadly embraces with its meritricious Looks and falſe Charms. The venomous ſting lies covered under the ſweet hony, and the ſinner perceives not the Dagger of the Treacherous Aſſaſſin, till he

he is ſtabb'd with it to the heart. But a little Wiſdom and Obſervation, and looking about us, would plainly diſcern the innumerable evils that ſin carries in its bowels, and is big and productive of; which grow out of it, as fruit from its proper root, and are inſeparably annexed to it as effects to their cauſes; that can no more be divorced or reſcinded from it, than light clipt from the Sun; and are unalterably ſetled upon it, by the nature and conſtitution of things, and the will, and appointment of the firſt cauſe and Author of them. How do many not only ſhipwrack their Conſciences, but their Fortunes too by their Vices in this world, where we ſee abundance of thoſe broken Veſſels, who have ſplit themſelves upon Lazineſs or Luxury, Lewdneſs or Prodigality, or ſome other wickedneſs, by which they have ruined themſelves here, as well as hereafter? How have others waſted their Bodies by the ſame courſes as they have done their Eſtates? And have ſinn'd particularly againſt thoſe as the Scripture ſpeaks, as well as againſt their Souls, and been a kind of Martyrs in the ſervice of the Devil, and their own Luſts, and endured more pains in their bodies to go to Hell, than other Martyrs have done to go to Heaven? How do they whoſe hopes and deſigns are only

ly in this Life, and who fear nothing ſo much as Death, and think nothing ſo happy as to live long; yet ſhorten their lives by their Vices, and by living as they call it too faſt, that is, running on in the full Career of wickedneſs, and galloping as hard as they can to Hell. How do they, I ſay, *Not live out half their days*? and they are ſometimes ſo haſty to die, that their bodies are often rotted before they come into their Graves, and their ſins in ſome meaſure prevent death. How have others ſtigmatized their names with their Vices, and brought a laſting reproach and real infamy upon themſelves and families; where yet nothing has been ſo dear to them as titular Reputation, and the falſe Image and Idol of Honour? How have they madly Sacrificed their Souls and their Lives to redeem that, which yet they have baſely thrown away by a ſcandalous Life, which has made them baſe and contemptible to all wiſe Men? Thus, how plain is it that ſin, beſides the vaſt and amazing miſeries of another World, brings moſt of the evils of this upon us; A blot and reproach to our credit and good names, ſickneſs and diſeaſes to our bodies, and often beggery to our ſelves and families; and above all ſpoils and corrupts the Mind, takes away the Peace and Improvement of it,

fills it with inward diſcompoſure and uneaſineſs; and often ſo impairs a Mans reaſon and underſtanding as to leave the old and wretched ſinner only the ſhape of a Man, with the nature and qualities of a Beaſt. Now all theſe a blinded ſinner either ſees not, or conſiders not; either quite forgets, or does not at all mind in the hot purſuit of his Lufts, and the hurry and tumult of his unruly Appetites; he feels not the Wounds that are given him in his hot blood, tho' when he grows cool a little he will be very ſenſible of them; his thoughts are wholly taken up with the fancied good and pleaſure, and he looks to nothing but that, nor conſiders the much greater evils and miſchiefs of them; ſo he purſues his Game and follows the Chaſe, and ſees not the pit or the precipice juſt before him, 'till he is faln into it; he leaps into certain danger without looking into it, and without any fear or foreſight, runs upon Death and Deſtruction, *as the horſe ruſhes into the battle*, as Scripture repreſents it, *Jer.* 8. 6. An inward heat and ardor ſpurs him on, and he is wholly driven by other principles than thoſe of his reaſonable nature, and the ſerious thoughts and conſiderations of things, or obſerving the conſequences of his own Actions. And thus ſin deceives him, in the next place,

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3. By taking off his Mind from conſidering and examining things, or reflecting upon his own Actions, or uſing his own Thoughts; it makes him live only by the ſuggeſtions of ſenſe, and the propenſities of his animal nature and lower inclinations, without the Exerciſe or Government of his thoughts or reaſon, *Like brute beaſts that have no underſtanding*, as the Scripture compares ſinners, *Pſ.* 32. 9. His Paſſions and Luſts, and irregular Appetites, grow maſterleſs and unruly, and get an intire Power and Dominion over him, and his reaſon has no check or controul over them; his Vices keep him always warm and heated, and never ſuffer him to cool or grow ſober, they ply him cloſe with what ſhall more intoxicate and beſot him, and keep him from ever coming to himſelf; ſo his mind is always dozed, and he lives under a perpetual kind of drunkenneſs, and loſs of his reaſon: his thoughts are always drowned in Hurry, Buſineſs, or Company, Drink, Noiſe, or Diverſion; or ſcattered and diſperſed in mad freaks and pranks of extravagance, and with a ſort of practical incoherent nonſenſe; or elſe amuſed with Phantaſtick Whimſies and Romantick Conceits, and imaginary Repreſentations of things, as they are drawn by Plays and Poets, contrary to all ſo-

ber thinking, and the right knowledge of the nature of things, as God has conſtituted them in the World. Thus it is with our either dull or witty unthinking Debauchees, who live a rambling, careleſs, thoughtleſs Life, without any true principles, or any ſerious conſideration or reflection, and examining of things; who care as little as can be to think at all, and therefore avoid themſelves as much as may be, and never love to be alone; for nothing is ſo troubleſome and uneaſie to them as themſelves and their own thoughts, and therefore they keep from them all they can, and would be quite without them if they could: And upon this account we find them often declaiming againſt reaſon and thinking, and extolling the condition of Beaſts above Men, which is only another way of commending themſelves, for at the ſame time they are endeavouring to be as equal and like to them as may be.

4. To ſhow the deceitfulneſs of ſin, we cannot but obſerve, that Vertue is much the likelier way to attain moſt of the preſent goods of this World, which ſin aims at, but generally loſes and deſtroys. Thus Sobriety, Chaſtity, and Temperance pick up that bodily pleaſure which is loſt and dropt by Vice and Debauchery, when they are ſo haſtily running after it,

it; the ambitious and covetous miſs often their aims, whilſt others unexpectedly meet with what they are in vain ſeeking; and generally moſt of the good things of this World, are by Nature and Providence ſettled upon Vertue, and loſt by Vice; the one *is a Tree of Life*, as the Wiſeman ſpeaks, *Prov.* 3. 18. and even literally *Health to our Navel and Marrow to the Bones*; while the other is a Diſeaſe and trouble to the Fleſh, and rottenneſs to the bones. The one is a Crown of honour that circles the head of the Wiſe and Vertuous, while the other is a foul ſtain and blemiſh to a mans Credit and good Name; the one is Peace and Joy and Gladneſs to the mind, the other is a worm to the Conſcience, a tormentor to the Soul, and an inward Hell in a Mans own breaſt. Wiſdom has *in her right hand length of days, and in her left hand riches and honour*; *her ways are ways of pleaſantneſs, and all her paths are peace*, as the Wiſeman long ago obſerved, *Prov.* 3. 17. whereas moſt of the temptations to ſin are Vain and Phantaſtick, Cheating and Deluſive, and have only appearances, but no real good in them; like *Zeuxis*'s Grapes, they are only painted artificially, but have no real ſweetneſs; they deceive the eye and the fancy at a diſtance, but there is nothing of true plea-

ſure and delight to be taſted in them, but often a real bitterneſs inſtead of it, *like the vines of* Sodom *and* Gomorrah, Deut. 32. 32. *their grapes are grapes of gall, their cluſters are bitter, their wine is the poyſon of dragons and the cruel venom of Aſps.*

Men always find themſelves deceived and diſappointed in their vain expectations of what their ſins will afford 'em, and therefore always come off with repentance, ſhame, and remorſe; and can never anſwer it to themſelves afterwards, nor find any good account in the reckoning when they come to caſt it up, and ask themſelves ſeriouſly the Apoſtle's queſtion, *What fruit had ye in thoſe things whereof ye are now aſhamed?* Rom. 6. 21. *They have walked after things that do not profit*, as the Prophet ſpeaks in another caſe, *Jer.* 2. 8. after mere Idols and Images of good, pleaſure and profit, which they have found to be nothing in the World, and to have no reality in them. They have courted and embraced a mere airy empty Cloud inſtead of *Juno*, and been led by a mere meteor, an *Ignis fatuus*, a falſe light and ſeeming appearance, which has bewildred and miſguided them in their blind ſearch and dark purſuit after their own good and happineſs. Where they have look'd for and expected any good, they have always miſſed

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of it, and found the contrary evil; their ſins have been ſo hard and cruel to them, that when they have ask'd Bread, they have given them a ſtone, and inſtead of a fiſh a ſerpent; and their own experience, which is the beſt and only teacher to them if they would attend to it, would learn 'em above all things the deceitfulneſs of ſin.

5. Sin deceives very much with being cuſtomary and faſhionable; this draws in a great many by the power of example, and the having ſuch numbers and ſo great a party on its ſide; for thereby the ſhame and reproach of it is in great meaſure took of, and the ſinner runs, he thinks, but the ſame riſque and venture with ſo many others, and hopes to fare as well as the reſt of his Companions and as others in the crowd. This is a ſtrong deluſion and works upon a great many, and is not ſo eaſily took off unleſs a great Authority, and a great example brings vertue into faſhion, as it eaſily may by having God and all good Men on its ſide; and ſo diſcountenances Vice, and makes it become as infamous and contemptible in the thoughts of others, as it is in it ſelf: and when a mark of infamy is ſet upon any thing, even upon the greateſt power or the greateſt ſin, it can never

long hold its intereſt, nor keep its ground. Vertue can never loſe its Credit by all the attempts in the World, but will always be honoured, and have a true value and eſteem in the hearts of Men; and even thoſe who forſake it, will yet have an inward awe and ſecret reverence of it: but Vice, tho' it bears a mark like *Cain* of ſhame and ignominy upon it, yet when it becomes modiſh and faſhionable, grows more bold and impudent; and eſcapes a great deal of that reproach and diſgrace that belongs to it, and bears out with ſome confidence and aſſurance, when otherwiſe it would ſneak and be covered with confuſion; then it endeavours as much as it can to run down ſolitary Vertue as a piece of ſingularity and affectation, and to change the opinion of Men in thoſe things, and alter if it could the very nature of Vice and Vertue, and the thoughts and ſentiments of mankind about them; and make falſe Names, and counterfeit Terms of honour to it ſelf. But it may as well change the ſeaſons of the year, and turn Summer into Winter, and Day into Night, and pluck up the fundamental Conſtitution of things, as deſtroy the fixt and immutable nature of good and evil; and as well pervert our ſenſes, or our perceptions of the motions made upon us by outward objects,

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as the ſettled Judgment and Opinion of Mankind, concerning the moral objects of our mind. Nature, and Reaſon, and Wiſdom are ſtubborn and inflexible things, and will not comply with the modes and humours of a fooliſh World, and will be always on Vertue's ſide; and however, the mad men and the vitious may have the majority, yet they will never carry it againſt the other, nor be able to contend with them in a cauſe that Heaven, and Nature, and Reaſon have decided and ſettled by a decree that is irreverſible. Health will be ſtill health, and is to be preferr'd to Pain and Diſeaſes, tho' in a general Contagion, and when never ſo many are ſick, and tho' the Diſeaſes make them never ſo frantick and light-headed. Life was a thing very valuable and comfortable to *Noah*, when all the World beſides periſhed; and Heaven will be never the leſs deſirable, nor Hell never the more tolerable, though there be few, as our Saviour ſays, that find the one, and many that go into the other: ſo little is there in this deceitful Temptation to ſin, that it has numbers on its ſide, and is cuſtomary and faſhionable.

6. Sin deceives very often by being counted a little one, but a ſmall trifle and peccadillo in reſpect of thoſe greater and more ſcandalous Vices that bear a black-

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er mark and fouler Character. Thus to drop an Oath now and then, to take a Cup a little too much ſometimes, to ſet off Diſcourſe with a little Profaneneſs and Obſcenity, and to make bold with God and Religion for a Jeſt and a Witty ſaying, and to go as far in ſome Liberties as is poſſible without committing the laſt act of ſin; theſe and other things are called only innocent freedoms and ſuch as the ſociable and well bred, and Perſons even of Conduct and Prudence can hardly avoid, if they would converſe in the World without the charge of too much preciſeneſs and moroſeneſs. But if theſe, however they are look'd on, are direct breaches of a Divine Law, if they are inconſiſtent with the known rules of Religion, if they are contrary to the Goſpel and the ſtrict commands of Chriſtianity; they are never to be called little or ſmall ſins, but ſuch as a Man muſt avoid upon the peril of his Salvation, and being excluded out of Heaven: beſides, theſe leſſer unregarded ſins lead to others, and take off the ſtrict guard and ſerious watchfulneſs we ought always to maintain over our ſelves; and lay us open very often to the greateſt temptations, by carrying us to the utmoſt bounds of what is lawfull, and ſo to the neareſt approaches of what is ſinfull; and like ſmaller wounds

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and leſſer illneſſes by being over much ſlighted, and not taken care of, they become in time dangerous and mortal.

Laſtly, for the deceits of ſin are innumerable, and cannot all be reckoned up, tho' it concerns mankind above all things to know and eſcape them, and not be cheated in the main things wherein their happineſs or miſery conſiſts; but the laſt thing I ſhall name is this, That many Men are deceived into ſin by thinking it may be eaſie to get rid of all the evil, and guilt, and puniſhment of it by the help of Repentance, and the merciſull proviſion of the Goſpel; by which they may quickly be ſet right again, and be in as good a ſtate as they were before. Now here are too many miſtakes to be conſider'd at preſent, I ſhall only ſay, that this is to be deceived not only in the nature of ſin, but in the nature of Repentance, and the nature of Religion, and to make that rather an incourager, and promoter of ſin than a deſtroyer of it, and to find out a trick, if it will do, even by the help of Religion it ſelf, to be too hard for Heaven upon its own Terms and Conceſſions; but God is not to be thus mocked or over-reached. No Repentance will do but what brings forth the fruits of obedience and a good life, nor is a ſin ſo eaſily repented of after it

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is committed, especially upon such presumptuous terms as may justly provoke God to give it up to an harden'd and impenitent heart, and to that wretched state which sin by being continued in will bring it to. Which is the next thing I am to consider,

2. How Men are hardened by their sins, or how sin hardens their minds afterwards, and brings them to the most wretched and depraved state and temper. And this I shall show.

1. In the gross or in general.

2. More particularly how, and to what degrees it hardens them.

3. Make some remarks and observations from the whole.

1. How Sin hardens in general. When a Man has given way to it in any great and willfull instances, and it has made a breach upon his purposes and resolutions which were too weak to hold out against it, it will enter with all its force and gain ground daily upon him, and quickly conquer and overcome him, if he do not repulse it immediately, and drive it out by Repentance: tho' he may a little struggle and rally against it, especially at the first beginning, when natural Conscience will strive awhile with his carnal Lusts and Inclinations; yet if in this conflict the Sin prevails and is too hard for the Spirit, and he continues to commit it, it will at last

laſt wholly maſter him and bring him into ſuch Bondage and Vaſſallage, that he ſhall loſe the moral liberty and freedom of his mind, and be ſuch a ſlave to it as to be led Captive by it at its will; ſo that in the ſame ſenſe he both will not, and cannot get rid of it, for he has then loſt the power of his mind, and is brought under the perfect dominion of his Lufts and Vices: ſo that tho' he ſees the plaineſt miſchief of them, and wiſhes he could leave them, and would do ſo, if a faint wiſh and a mere velleity were ſufficient; yet he ſtill lives in them to the plaineſt ruin both of his Body and Soul, to his undoing both in this World and another; and tho' he ſees and feels the pernicious conſequences and effects of them, yet neither a decayed Body, nor a diſordered Mind, nor a ſhattered Eſtate, nor Conſcience, nor Credit, nor his own Reaſon, which condemns and reproaches him for them, can ever prevail upon him to forſake and abandon them.

They have taken ſuch ſtrong hold of him, and he is ſo much under their power, that he cannot for all theſe ſtrong arguments and conſiderations reſiſt the next temptation or opportunity that invites to them; His Lufts and ſenſual Inclinations and diſorderly Appetites are grown ſo ſtrong, and his Reaſon and Religion ſo

ſo weak and unable to reſiſt them, that like a mighty Torrent, they carry all before them; and indeed he himſelf has broke down all the banks that ſhould withſtand them, and he is carried down by the violent ſtream of his Luſts, till it dryes up of it ſelf, and age, and infirmity abate and ſink it, and his ſins, as we commonly ſay, leave him; and even then when he is dead to ſin in ſome ſenſe, yet the Ghoſts of his departed Vices ſtill haunt him, and the Phantoms or fancies, the Spirits (if I may ſo call them) of his Lewdneſs and Debauchery, ſtill hover over the Grave and the Carkaſs as it were of an old ſinner, and will not quite depart from him.

This hardning of a ſinner is gradual, and comes not all at once upon him, but by the power of Cuſtom, and the ſtrength of Vitious Habits, he is brought by time and degrees to this hardned ſtate, and by an unaccountable quality in ſin it ſelf, whereby the mind is as it were petrified by it, and brought to that ἀπολίθωσις and ἀπόνιχρωσις which the Platoniſts often ſpeak of; ſuch a deadneſs and ſtupidneſs of its faculties, and its moral powers as we cannot well expreſs. Every ſin hardens the mind a little, and weakens the firſt tender ſenſe of good and evil that is natural to it; and the longer it continues

tinues in it, it ſenſibly hardens it the more, tho' by ſecret and inſenſible means, as even Stones grow out of the Earth that was at firſt ſoft and fluid, but by time and a ſaline and other qualities they grow hard and rocky. A Sinner at firſt had great tenderneſs of mind, and could hardly be brought to commit a willfull Sin; 'till by Cuſtom and many repeated Acts, he grew more harden'd and embolden'd: So that what he committed at firſt with reluctancy, he commits afterwards with greedineſs; the firſt conception and formation of Sin in his mind was by a ſmall ſeed or principle, and by an unaccountable growth and increaſe, a wicked thought became at firſt an Inclination, or rather a natural Inclination produced a Thought, a Thought increaſed the Inclination, that begot a Delight, a Delight a Conſent, a Conſent an Act, an Act, by degrees, a Habit, and that becomes ſtronger and ſtronger by time; As in the growth of our bodies Anatomiſts tell us a Gelly becomes a Nerve, a Fibre, a Tendon, a Muſcle or a Bone, by ſtrange and imperceptible ways. The Body of Sin, which the Scripture ſpeaks of, is formed by cuſtom, and grows ſtill more and more, and has no fixt ſtature ſet to it, but is harder to be put off the older it is, and gets ſtrength every day, and renews

news it by age: The Sin which at firſt might have been eaſily withſtood and overcome, and like a young Weed readily pluck'd up; afterwards takes ſuch deep root in a Man's mind that 'tis the hardeſt thing in the World to remove it, and to get rid of a long and confirmed habit, that has been a great while growing upon us.

This hardning of the Mind by Sin I take to proceed from Cuſtom, which has an unaccountable force and power upon us; and does as it were bend the Will that way, and put ſo ſtrong a byaſs upon the Thoughts and Inclinations of the Mind, that it can hardly with all its natural Liberty and God's ordinary Grace, get off of it; and when the Will is thus obſtinately bent to any Luſt or Wickedneſs, it affects and draws in the Underſtanding, and corrupts the Judgment; and the mind at the ſame time, it is thus hardned by its Vices, is blinded alſo by them: and ſo the two great powers and faculties of the Soul are corrupted by it both at once; for hardning reſpects properly the Will, and blinding the Underſtanding, and they always go together, and are promiſcuouſly mention'd, the one for the other in Scripture. Mens Luſts and Vices as they harden them, and bring as it were a *Callus* upon the mind by long

long uſe and make it to be *paſt feeling*, as Scripture ſpeaks, ſo they darken and blind the Underſtanding, which is as it were the Eye of the Soul, and bring a cloud over it, or caſt a miſt before it, and hinder it from ſeeing and diſcerning things as it ought to do. Theſe, I confeſs, are all figurative expreſſions, whereby we are forc'd to deſcribe and illuſtrate the Acts and Operations of the Mind, by material and bodily reſemblances, as the Holy Ghoſt it ſelf does: But there are ſuch real effects in the Mind as anſwer to them, and about which we can uſe no other Words or Ideas. Mens Sins at the ſame time they harden their Wills, and bring them to a ſenſeleſsneſs and ſtupidity about their moral Actions, they blind their Judgment alſo, and bring them to a Reprobate ſenſe, ſo as not to ſee the plaineſt Truths or greateſt Evidence, nor be aware of the groſſeſt and moſt notorious Errors, nor be convinced by the ſtrongeſt Arguments and Demonſtrations for the Truth or Practice of Religion.

2. I ſhall conſider a little more particularly in the 2*d*. place, how, and to what degrees the mind is thus hardned and blinded by its Sins.

1. And this is done first of all by breaking thro' natural shame, and the innate modesty of our minds; this is one of the strongest fences which God and Nature have set about Vertue, and the greatest check and restraint against Vice; for it arises from the first quick and discerning sense of the mind, whereby it sees the fitness and reasonableness of the one, and the indecency and natural turpitude and shame of the other; and when this is once broke thro', the mind is quickly Prostituted and Debauched to the greatest Lewdness and Villany, and comes to Sin Impudently and with *a Whore's forehead*: at first indeed it was modest and reserv'd, and blush'd at the rude offers of Sin, and ran from them; but by coming nearer and making some further approaches to it, it was drawn in to consent; and so having lost its Original innocence and native modesty, it is sooner brought to after-acts of Sin, and wears off by degrees that shame which was its great guard and preservative at first; and then it lies open to every Temptation, and becomes common to every offer and opportunity that invites it; and hardly needs to be tempted, but becomes a tempter both to it self and others, and

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a Pander in time to all Vice and Wickedneſs.

2. Sin hardens by ſtupifying Conſcience, and deadning the inward and natural ſenſe of good and evil on our Minds ſo as to bring Men by degrees to Sin without ſtruggle, diſpute, or reluctancy. It muſt be a great while before it comes to this, and a man muſt have gone thro' a long courſe before he can arrive at this ſtate and perfection of Sinning. No Man can commit a plain and great Sin at firſt without great ſtruggle and remorſe of mind, and great reluctance and oppoſition from his own Conſcience; the ſpirit will ſtrive againſt the fleſh, as *the fleſh luſteth againſt the ſpirit*, *Gal.* 5. 17. there being a natural principle of Vertue in us as well as of Vice. And as a good Man muſt have many conflicts with his lower inclinations before he can arrive at a full ſtate of Vertue; ſo muſt a bad Man have as great a conteſt with his Conſcience and the natural ſenſe of his own Mind before he can be perfectly wicked. Conſcience will check and reſtrain him at firſt, and inwardly ſmite and reprove him for doing amiſs, and this is an evident proof of the natural difference

between good and evil, and an excellent Monitor ſet up by God in every Mans breaſt to mind him of his duty, and the great ſecurity indeed of all Religion; but when Men have, by many acts and long cuſtoms of wickedneſs, waſted and ſinned away Conſcience, and ſtifled or ſtupified the inward ſenſe of their own minds, ſo as to ſin with greater eaſe, and without any trouble or oppoſition from within, without any rebukes or reſiſtances, or remorſes of their own Conſciences for whatever they do; then they are become perfect Sinners indeed, and come to an abſolute and full ſtate of Wickedneſs, to be hardned into an utter inſenſibility, ſo *as to be paſt feeling*, and to have *their Conſcience*, as it were, *ſeared with a hot iron*, as the Scripture ſpeaks, 1 *Tim.* 4. 2. ſo as to be quite ſenſeleſs. This ſenſeleſsneſs may ſeem an eaſier and leſs painfull ſtate, but it is more mortal and dangerous; and is juſt ſuch a Diſeaſe to the Soul, as an Apoplexy or a Lethargy is to the body. If this ſenſeleſsneſs and ſtupidity would always laſt, it were much better indeed than ſharp and actual pain, but the Conſcience of a Sinner, tho' it may ſleep and ſlumber a while, yet it will awake one time or other, and like

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an enraged Lyon tear and devour all about it; Either Death or Sickneſs, or ſome Judgment or Affliction will probably rowſe it here, and bring the ſtupify'd mind to it ſelf; or to be ſure the flames of Hell will make it open its Eyes when it is too late, when it can ſee nothing but horror and deſpair before it, and round about it, and where its Conſcience ſhall always torment it with a Worm that never dieth, and with never ceaſing Anguiſh and Remorſe.

3. A third inſtance and degree of being thus hardned by Sin, is doubting of the Truth of Religion, and calling into queſtion the principles of it, and at laſt an utter rejecting and diſ-believing of them. No Man ever did this till he was corrupted in his morals, and engaged in a vitious courſe; ſo that this Scepticiſm and Infidelity, was plainly the effect and conſequent of his Vices; and proceeded from his Will, blinded with his Sins and Luſts, rather than from his Underſtanding, or from any want of Evidence about thoſe matters. It was firſt the Sinners wiſh and deſire that there were no God, before he queſtion'd whither there was one or no;

and he never doubted of the truth of another World, till it was againſt his Intereſt, and he was loſt and undone, if there were one, and therefore he was very unwilling to believe it. Men muſt have very much blinded their Minds, if they do not ſee the plaineſt Evidence for Religion, both from Nature and Reaſon, and from Hiſtory and Revelation; from the make and frame of the World, and from the make of their own bodies, and the inward ſenſe of their own Minds: all which make it as unreaſonable almoſt to doubt of the Being of a God, as to doubt of their own being and exiſtence; and we may as well be Scepticks to the truth of any thing elſe, as to the truth of Religion.

4. There is a degree yet beyond this, and that is ridiculing Religion, and expoſing it to Contempt and Laughter; which is not only the utmoſt and moſt deſperate attempt and affront againſt God, but the moſt rude and unmannerly, as well as miſchievous thing to all Mankind; for all ſober and wiſe Men, and civiliz'd Nations, have always believed there is a God, and 'tis no very civil thing to call them all Fools or Cheats for doing ſo; 'tis ſo much the intereſt, nay the neceſſity of mankind

kind that there ſhould be one, that all Government, all Security, all Society, and living happily in the World, muſt be loſt without it; to laugh therefore at this, as either a Politick Cheat or a Melancholy Deluſion, on which ſo much depends, both as to the benefit of the publick, and the happineſs and comfort of all private Men, is only to ſhow the boldeſt folly and ill-will, both together; and, without any reaſon in the World, to take upon themſelves to perſwade mankind that they are deceived in the moſt uſefull and neceſſary thing to 'em that can be. 'Tis certainly the higheſt impudence and rudeneſs to run down thoſe things, and expoſe them as ridiculous, which have been the greateſt objects of Honour and Reverence to all wiſe men; and to treat Religion and things Sacred, with jeſt and drollery, about which all the World has been the moſt ſerious and in earneſt; and to mock and ſcoff at that which others bow down to and tremble at. This is only a more mad and daring bravery in wickedneſs, and one of the higheſt inſtances of a corrupted and hardned Mind. I ſhall add but another, which is an effect as it were of this; and that is,

5. An induſtrious deſign of being wicked and glorying in it; to make it their buſineſs to ſpread and promote it, and to take pleaſure not only in committing Sin themſelves, but likewiſe in thoſe that do it. This is to love Wickedneſs for Wickedneſs ſake, and out of pure oppoſition to Vertue, and a direct enmity to Religion; When Men make it their Trade and a kind of Profeſs'd Science to be Debauch'd, and ſet down rules to themſelves and others of being ſo; When they can boaſt of their Wickedneſs, and glory in it; and aſſume perhaps more to themſelves than they have been guilty of, and charge themſelves with ſuch Sins as they never committed, thereby to Triumph as it were in their mighty deeds and great exploits; and, to endear themſelves the more to their Lewd Companions, when they endeavour to out-do one another, and out-vye their fellow Sinners in Oaths, Drinking, and Debauchery; and give greater proofs of their higheſt proficiency in Wickedneſs and Lewdneſs. This is perfectly giving up themſelves to the Devil's Service, and to toil and drudge in it, as his greateſt Slaves, and as his Diſciples to devote themſelves to him,

him, and become ſworn votaries to Hell and Wickedneſs, and declare themſelves Champions and Defenders of his cauſe and intereſt, againſt God and Religion. 'Tis ſtrange that Human Nature ſhould be depraved and corrupted to theſe degrees, but we ſee too many Examples of it in the World; and we ſee too what is the cauſe of it; namely, men's being ſo ſtrangely hardned and blinded by their Sins, and having their Reaſon and Underſtanding and all the Faculties of their Minds ſo horribly corrupted and depraved by them.

3. From what has been ſaid, I ſhall make the following Remarks and Obſervations.

1. I obſerve from hence, That our proper and trueſt happineſs lies in the Perfection and Improvement of our Minds; and therefore we ought to take the greateſt care of them.

2. That Vice is the greateſt Corruption and Depravation of the Mind; and therefore we ſhould not ſuffer that to grow upon us.

3. I ſhall enquire into the Scripture-notion of God's hardning Men, and whether that be any thing more than our Sins hardning us.

4. From hence we may conceive and underſtand the miſery and wretched ſtate of the Devils and damn'd Souls, who are come to the higheſt degree of this hardning.

1. I obſerve that our proper and trueſt happineſs lies in the Perfection and Improvement of our Minds.

The happineſs of any Being muſt be ſuited and adapted to its Capacity and Faculties; for otherwiſe it has no root to grow upon, and the more thoſe Capacities are enlarged and extended, and have agreeable objects to fill and entertain 'em, the greater is the happineſs of it. The loweſt Creatures that have ſenſe, have very ſmall Capacities, and their Enjoyments are very little; the more we riſe in the ſcale of Beings, the Capacities are greater till we come to the All-perfect Being; We have bodily Capacities, the ſame with the Brutes, which can partake of ſuch bodily pleaſures as they do; but theſe are very little

little and narrow, and confined to few things, and a ſhort time. We have much higher Capacities even like God himſelf, whereby we take in all the truth that can be known, and all the good that can be enjoyed; and hoard up theſe immortal Treaſures in our Minds, and in the fulleſt meaſure of thoſe conſiſts our proper happineſs as we are Men, and Rational, and Immortal Beings. 'Tis in our Souls, thoſe nobleſt parts of us, that our Happineſs lies and will lie for ever; Our bodies are poor dying decaying matter, that can afford very little Enjoyments, and for a very little while; the capacities of the mind are great and large, and comprehenſive, and can reach not only to all things that are made, but even to the God that made them, and partake of a proper happineſs from all of them; for the more it increaſes its knowledge, and grows up to a more perfect Underſtanding, and to a more free choice and entire willing of what is good; and the more good it enjoys, and the more its faculties are enlarged and filled up with their proper objects, the more Happineſs and Perfection, Satisfaction and Enjoyment it muſt have; and this will be its Eternal Heaven when we ſhall be as like God as we can be,

and

and equal to the Angels in the proper perfections of our rational nature advanced to the higheſt degrees, and the moſt unſpeakable Enjoyments and Satisfactions.

2. Vice is the greateſt Corruption and Depravation of the Mind, and therefore is our greateſt miſery; it ſinks and impairs the Faculties, decays and weakens the Mind, as a Diſeaſe does the body, and fills it generally like that with pain and uneaſineſs; as being contrary to its natural frame, and to its proper and regular Operations. Vertue is the Vigor and Health, the Soundneſs and right Conſtitution of the Soul, the Spiritual life which Religion and God's Grace would advance it to; but Vice and Wickedneſs are the Spiritual death of it, both in the Language of the Scripture, and of the beſt Philoſophers of Old; their manner and cuſtom of ſetting a Coffin in the place of him that had left the Schools and Precepts of Vertue, was ſpeaking the ſame thing in emblem and figure with the Scripture expreſſion of being *dead in treſpaſſes and ſins*; The loſs of the Soul is juſtly accounted ſo great an one, as the gain of the whole World will not com-

compenſate ; *What ſhall it profit a Man,* ſays our Saviour, *to gain the whole world and loſe his own Soul?* Matth. 16. 26. Now the Soul can never be ſo loſt as to loſe its Being or its Power of thinking. Happy would it be for a great many if it could ſo loſe it ſelf, and vaniſh into air or nothing : but 'tis the loſs of its proper Life and Happineſs of the right uſe of its noble Powers and Faculties, and of thoſe Operations and Enjoyments it was made for ; and ſuffering the Miſery and Anguiſh which its own thoughts bring upon it; This is the unvaluable loſs of the Soul, and a great part of its Hell, as I ſhall ſhow immediately.

Sin indeed brings the Mind to this loſt and wretched condition by degrees; it darkens and blinds the Mind, and ſpoils its powers of rightly Judging and Underſtanding ; not in an inſtant, but as darkneſs comes upon the Earth by gradual approaches. 'Tis hard perhaps to give a full Account how it does this ; but it employs the thoughts upon wrong and undue objects ; it immerſes and ſinks 'em in carnal Fancies and ſenſual Ideas ; it perverts and diſtorts the Judgment, and gives it undue repreſentat-

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ons of things; or it takes it off from thinking and conſidering at all; by ſuch means it brings it to this paſs, tho' it *have eyes to ſee, yet it ſees not*, tho' it have Underſtanding, that is, the natural power of it, yet it underſtands not, *Mat.* 13. 14. ſo tho' it have its power of willing, yet it wills only evil, and has no moral ability to will good from the ſtrong prevalency of its own evil deſires and affections. This is loſing the Soul, and the right powers of it, and making it like an abſorpt Star, loſe its proper light, center, and motion, tho' it be ſtill a Star but fallen, dark and wandring.

3. And this I take in the third place to be the Scripture-notion of hardning, when Men's ſins bring 'em to this ſtate; and when God is ſaid to harden them, 'tis not by any poſitive influx or poyſonous infuſion; nor yet perhaps by withdrawing his ordinary Grace, and the means of converſion from them: this he did not from *Pharaoh* or the *Jews*, or any other Sinners that we know of. 'Tis only Sin that hardens them, and their own Luſts and Vices that blind them; and when God is ſaid to do it, 'tis generally by doing ſuch things as are the occaſion, not the cauſe of it; which

which are in themſelves proper means of working quite other effects upon them, not of hardning and blinding, but rather of converting and convincing them: Such were all the Miracles God wrought and all the Methods he uſed, both with the *Jews* and with *Pharaoh*, where he tried all ways to bring them off from their Obſtinacy and Infidelity, and continued ſo to do, notwithſtanding their abuſe of them. God ſtrikes no Man ſpiritually blind, nor takes away that light which is neceſſary for him to ſee by; or that ſtrength and aſſiſtance which is neceſſary to convert him. 'Tis the Clouds only darken the Earth, and not the Sun; 'tis the interpoſal of the dark body of the one, and not the withdrawing the beams of the other, which properly brings night upon it. I very much queſtion whether there be any other judicial hardneſs and blindneſs, eſpecially in this Life, than what Mens ſins bring upon them; their being left to the malignant Power and efficacy of thoſe, is without any other influence or cauſality, the entire reaſon of their hardneſs and blindneſs; and God is ſaid to leave them and give them up to hardneſs of heart, juſt as a Phyſician leaves his Patient to the in-

incurable malignity of his Diſtemper, without either giving him any thing to encreaſe it, or without withdrawing the Application of any proper Remedies that might help to cure it.

4. Fourthly and Laſtly, By this we may conceive and underſtand the miſery and wretched ſtate of the Devils and damned Souls, who are under the utmoſt and irreverſible ſtate of this hardned and depraved temper of Soul; which will naturally and neceſſarily make them miſerable. Thoſe accurſed Spirits were once capable of noble pleaſures and improvements of mind; but Sin and Diſobedience to God, has ſpoil'd, and ſunk, and corrupted them, and brought them to this wretched condition, where their thoughts are filled only with rage and malice againſt God, and with an extream horror and dread of him, joyned with as great rage and vexation againſt themſelves. 'Tis a terrible thing for a poor Creature willfully to offend and ſin againſt its Great God; impudently to affront and defie its Maker, and trample upon his Laws and Government; which is ſetting up its own Will, Thoughts, and Reaſon, againſt his. This will bring it to dread-

full

full Thoughts and Reſentments one day, whatever we think of it, or however we ſlight it now. Sin would not have had a Hell and Eternal torments prepared for it by a good God, had it not been an oppoſition to the Will and Counſels of Heaven, to all God's deſigns in making Us, and making the World; and contrary to all the meaſures of God's Wiſdom and Government, and to the Good and Welfare of the whole Syſtem of Beings. Vice therefore by the order of things, throws Men into this miſerable ſtate; and a lower ſpirit by having its Thoughts, its Will, and Underſtanding, ſo contrary and oppoſite to the higheſt ſpirit, and by not having due regards and obſervances to him, muſt neceſſarily fall into this ſtate of Miſery, as well as of his utmoſt Wrath and Diſpleaſure. It's Vices have depraved and corrupted its mind, given it wrong Thoughts of God, and of every thing elſe; and ſunk it into the love of evil, and of every thing contrary to God and Goodneſs; made it delight in miſchief, and in doing ſuch things as are directly contrary to the good of its fellow Creatures, if it were but a little gratifying to it ſelf. And now that falſe pleaſure is gone off, and

it is left wholly to the ſting of its Vices, and it therefore reflects with infinite remorſe upon the folly, and the madneſs, and the miſchief of them; but it cannot now redreſs or amend them, or what injury it has done by them; and therefore it muſt lie for ever under the inſupportable weight and burden of them. It cannot now raiſe up its thoughts to any love or deſire of God, whom it has always had a fix'd contempt and neglect of; it cannot now take any delight in him, or the apprehenſions of him whom it ſeldom or ever thought of, or ever car'd to Worſhip or Acknowledge before; and there is nothing now to divert or entertain it, its bodily Pleaſures and worldly Enjoyments are gone off, and not here to be met with; and it is left wholly to its own uncomfortable thoughts, and to the extream anguiſh and bitterneſs of them. It never rightly underſtood nor loved either God or Goodneſs; and now there is nothing elſe to be loved; and therefore it muſt hate it ſelf and every thing elſe: It muſt now bear the miſery of its own ill mind, which it has been ſpoiling and corrupting all its Life, and bringing to this ſad ſtate and condition; and now it is deſperate and irrecoverable

ble, and becauſe it has loſt the only opportunities of improving and fitting it for happineſs, it muſt now neceſſarily be miſerable with it as long as its duration laſts, that is for ever.

God grant that we may avoid all thoſe ſins which will thus ſpoil our minds, and bring this hardneſs, and this miſery upon us.

F I N I S.

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